OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™



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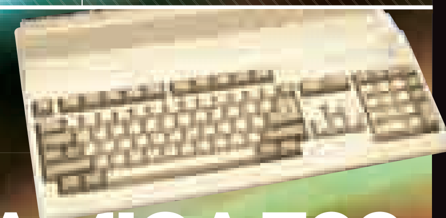
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

FEEL THE FORCE WITH ATARI'S 2600

THE MAKING OF PAPERBOY
JOHN SALWITZ AND DAVE RALSTON DISCUSS THEIR CLASSIC ATARI HIT



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AMIGA 500
THE RISE AND RISE AND RISE OF COMMODORE'S 16-BIT WONDER

ED ROTBERG
THE CREATOR OF BATTLEZONE BECOMES OUR LATEST CASTAWAY

BARGAIN HUNT
EVERY GAMES MACHINE LISTED
WANT TO START COLLECTING VINTAGE HARDWARE? CHECK OUT OUR COMPLETE LISTING

EXCLUSIVE MAKING OF...

JETPAC REFUELLED
HOW RARE REVITALISED A SPECTRUM CLASSIC

BACK TO THE 80s

FROM ARMALYTE TO SANXION: THE COMPLETE STORY

COMPANY PROFILE THALAMUS

RETRO REVIVALS

THE MAKING OF... PUTTY

FEATURED THIS MONTH IN RETRO GAMER

DUKE NUKEM 3D
THE 2D NOBODY WHO TURNED INTO A 3D SUPERSTAR

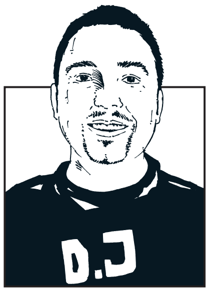
LEMMINGS
DISCOVER HOW A BUNCH OF SUICIDAL RODENTS INVADED THE INDUSTRY

POWERMONGER
MOVE OVER POPULOUS, YOU'VE GOT SOME SERIOUS COMPETITION

PARALLAX
JON HARE LOOKS BACK AT SENSIBLE SOFTWARE'S FIRST GAME

THE RETROBATES

WHAT RARE GAME DO YOU WANT REMADE?



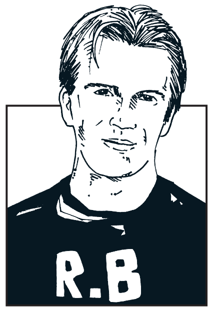
DARRAN JONES

Jet Force Gemini. It was criminally ignored by the masses and had far too much collecting in it, but good gracious was it fun. I can only salivate when I think what a new version would look like.
Expertise: Rubbing people up the wrong way
Currently playing: *Wartech: Senko No Ronde*
Favourite game of all time: *Robotron: 2084*



ASHLEY DAY

The vastly underrated *Blast Corps* on N64. Ten years on, it remains Rare's most original game and is crying out for some kind of remake… mostly because I never did unlock all the bonus levels.
Expertise: The world's second best retro magazine
Currently playing: *Space Manbow*
Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



RICHARD BURTON

I'd love a first-person perspective version of *Sabre Wulf*. Running through a graphically enhanced textured jungle with beasties and poisonous orchids at every turn – it would be groovy. And please, Mr Stamper brothers… *Mire Mare*…
Expertise: Spectrum and Amstrad gaming
Currently playing: *Super Mario Kart*
Favourite game of all time: *Manic Miner*



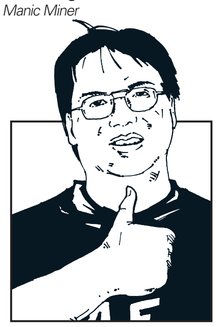
MIKE TOOLEY

My favourite Ultimate game was *Alien 8*. One of the greatest gaming heroes ever created, and puzzles crafted from ingenious and warped minds, made it one of those great 'one day I will complete this' games. A remake would give me a second chance.
Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played
Currently playing: *Command & Conquer 3*
Favourite game of all time: *Mr Do!*



DAVID CROOKES

I loved *Atic Atac* and, while it's been remade a few times since, its blend of adventure and shooting was the perfect game for me as a wee six-year-old and would be just as good today.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, Dizzy, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing: *Impossible Mission DS*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*



ANDREW FISHER

I'd like to see *The Staff Of Karnath* as a *Castlevania*-style DS game, with stylus bits for casting.
Expertise: From *Ancipital* to *Zookeeper*, 25 years of gaming
Currently playing: *Alter Ego*
Favourite game of all time: *The Sentinel*



PAUL DRURY

Super Glove Ball. There haven't been many decent releases for the Nintendo Power Glove for a while now so an update would surely be welcomed with open arms.
Expertise: Getting programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing: *Bad Street Brawler*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*



SPANNER

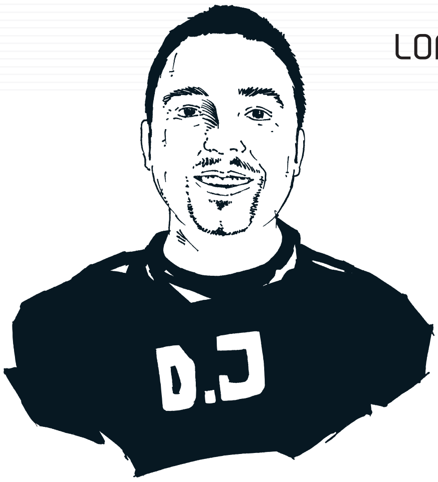
I'd like to see *Viva Piñata* remade for the machine that's best suited for it: the Speccy. Attribute clash would do it a world of justice.
Expertise: Virtual gardening
Currently playing: *Advanced Lawnmower Simulator*
Favourite game of all time: *Horace Goes To B&Q On A Bank Holiday Monday And Murders A Pensioner For The Last Bag Of Compost*



CRAIG GRANNELL

I'd like to see *Pssst* for Wii. With luck, the Wiimote would enable simultaneous blasting of on-screen bugs and splatting of those annoying flies that get into your house during the summer.
Expertise: Games you don't need 37 fingers control
Currently playing: *Fort Apocalypse*
Favourite game of all time: *H.E.R.O.*

LOADING...



When we featured a making of *Jet Set Willy Online* recently, we came under attack from members of certain forums saying we had no right giving six pages to a remake when there were far older games that deserved the space instead.

Well, we're blowing all those that didn't like it a big fat raspberry because we've done exactly the same thing again this month. Oliver Frey's gorgeous cover and the accompanying tagline should give you an idea, but in case you've missed it there's an in-depth look at Rare's *Jetpac Refuelled* on page 90.

First and foremost, Retro Gamer is a magazine that's dedicated to bringing you the greatest retro articles around. But that doesn't mean we won't look at certain modern titles. Just because we give the occasional few pages to a game like *Jetpac Refuelled*, *Prince Of Persia Classic*, *Sim City DS* or any other remakes that we happen to enjoy, it doesn't mean we're being lazy, can't be bothered to track people down or are taking corporate backhanders; it just means that we want to celebrate retro gaming in all its forms, whether they're past or current. We love retro gaming in all its shapes and forms, and judging by the vast amount of praise we get, you do too.

Enjoy the magazine

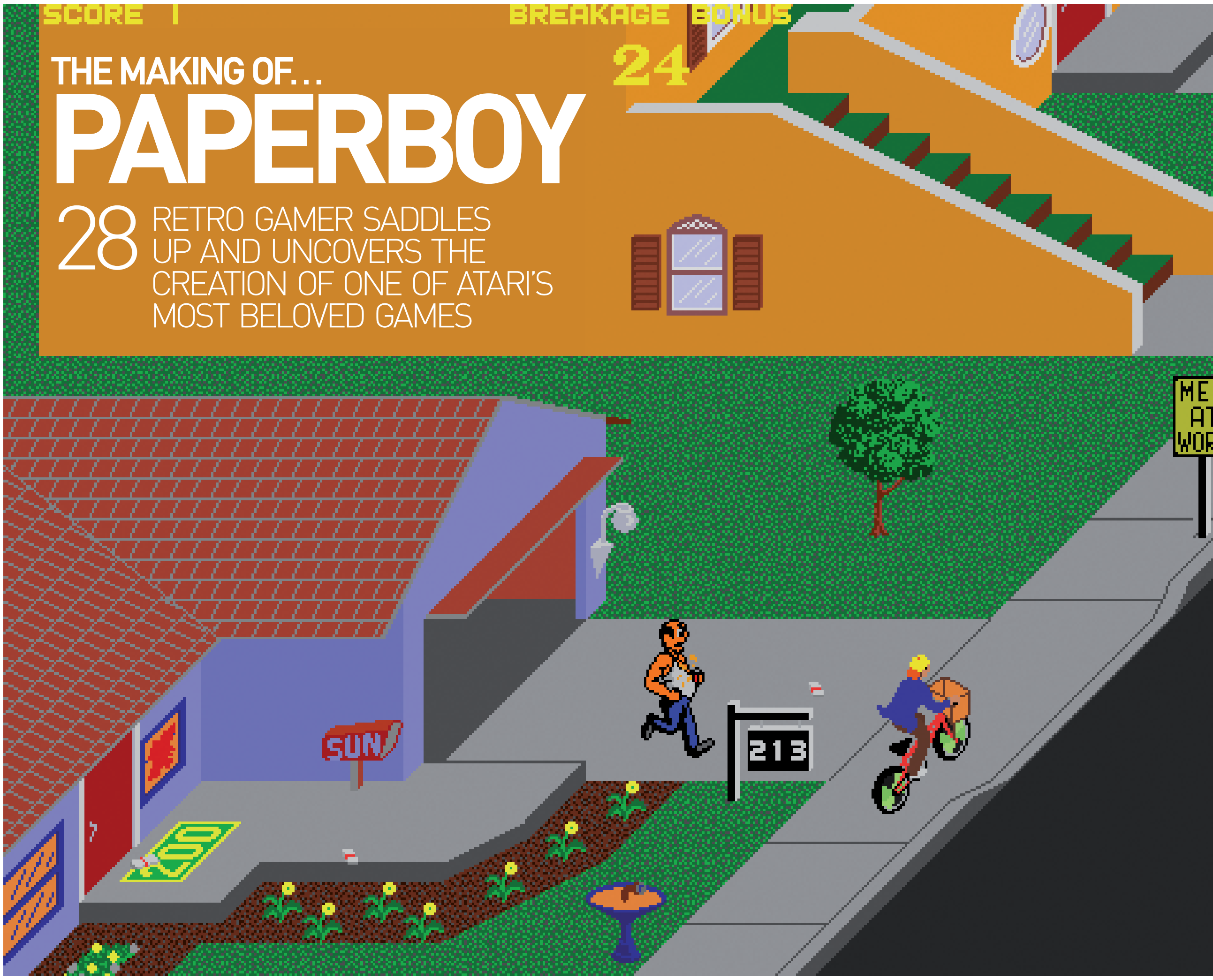






CONTENTS

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES



THE MAKING OF…

PAPERBOY

28 RETRO GAMER SADDLES UP AND UNCOVERS THE CREATION OF ONE OF ATARI'S MOST BELOVED GAMES

INSIDE

At-a-glance retro sections…

6 **NEWS**
The latest retro news, events and announcements

14 **HOME-BREW SCENE**
More reviews and remakes than ever before

22 **BACK TO THE EIGHTIES**
Burton's back with another month of nostalgic goodness

26 **RETRO REVIVAL**
We look back fondly at *The Empire Strikes Back*

40 **PERFECT TEN**
The ten Amiga 500 games you simply must own

42 **AND THE REST…**
A double page of Amiga 500 goodness, just for you

70 **RETRO REVIVAL**
Why Trantor really was the last stormtrooper

84 **DESERT ISLAND DISKS**
Battlezone's Ed Rotberg is our latest castaway

94 **RETRO RATED**
A four-page round-up of PSP games with a retro bent

102 **BARGAIN HUNT**
If you're planning on starting up a retro collection, this is the perfect place to start looking

110 **CLASSIFIEDS**



RETROINSPECTION

AMIGA 500

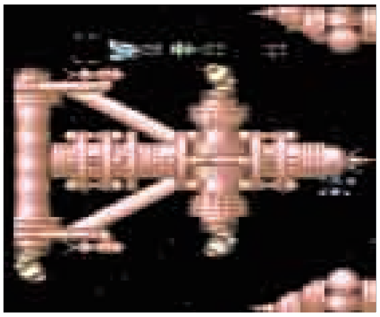
34 Now in its 20th year, there's never been a better time to look back at Commodore's 16-bit computer.



THE MAKING OF…

PARALLAX

44 Jon Hare stops by to talk about the evolution of *Parallax*, Sensible Software's very first title.



COMPANY PROFILE

THALAMUS

50 Thalamus was one of the darlings of the C64 but then everything went disastrously wrong…

ESSENTIALS

Retro Radar	6	Letters	18
Diary	12	Back To The Eighties	22
Home-Brew	14	Subscriptions	100
Binder Offer	17	Bargain Hunt	102

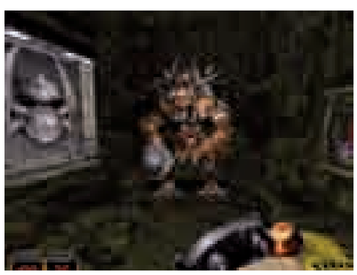
THE ART OF C&VG

60 IN A BREAK FROM HIS USUAL DEFINITIVE GUIDE, STUART CAMPBELL DECIDES TO GUSH OVER THE VARIED ARTWORK OF COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES MAGAZINE



THE MAKING OF...

66 ONCE UPON A TIME HE WAS JUST CONTENT TO FEATURE IN SIMPLE PLATFORMERS, BUT THEN THE DUKE DECIDED TO LEAP INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION. THIS IS THE STORY OF DUKE NUKEM 3D



RETRO RATED

THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it



94 CRUSH

94 SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

94 TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

95 SPACE INVADERS EVOLUTION

95 EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

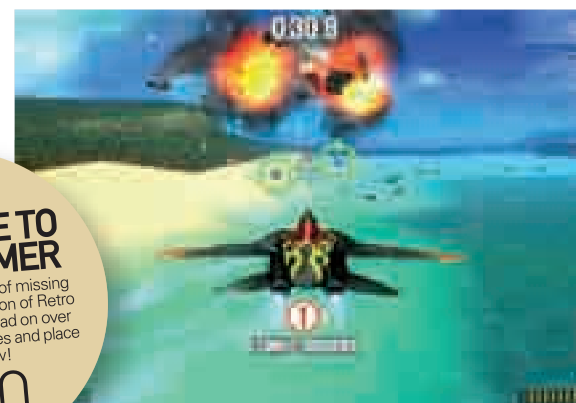
95 AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON

96 THRILLVILLE

96 VIRTUA TENNIS 3

96 LUMINES II

97 GUNPEY



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p100

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



SNK

PART TWO

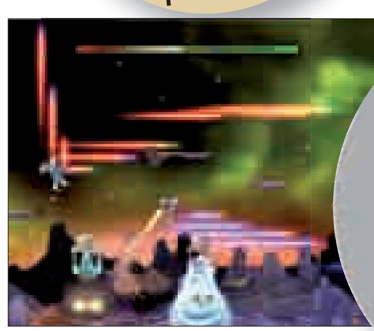
72 With a company as longstanding as SNK you have to do it proper justice, so here's the second part of our trilogy.



THE MAKING OF...

LEMMINGS

78 They're easily the most recognisable videogame rodents of all time. Find out how they became so popular.



THE MAKING OF...

JETPAC REFUELLED

90 Discover what happens when a bunch of talented Rare coders are let loose on Xbox Live Arcade.

RETRORADAR

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…

6 MORE WORMS
6 RETRO NORTH EVENT
6 HERO OF THE MONTH
7 NEW XBOX LIVE ARCADE CLASSICS
7 RETROVISION
7 LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH
7 HOME-BREW REMAKES
8 SÖLDNER-X SHOOTER
8 GEOMETRY WARS HITS DS AND WII
8 FINAL FANTASY IV GETS 3D UPDATE
9 R-TYPE TACTICS
9 NEW ATARI 2600 GAME
10 PRINCE OF PERSIA
10 CARD FIGHTERS
10 VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

HERO OF THE MONTH



MS PAC-MAN

Every month, Retro Gamer looks at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of Ms Pac-Man.

First appearance: *Ms Pac-Man*

Distinguishing features: Red Bow

Weapon of choice: Power Pellets

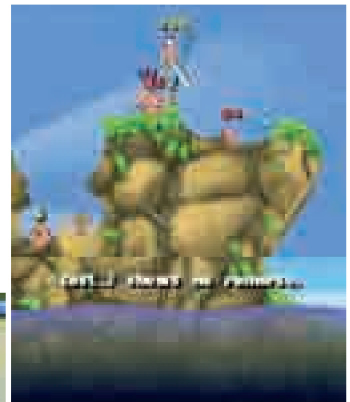
Most likely to: Marry Pac-Man and raise Jr Pac-Man

Least likely to: Have a threesome with Blinky and Clyde

Unusual fact: Rumours persist that Pac-Man and Ms Pac-Man are the same character because you've never seen them in the same place at the same time. Just like Michael and La Toya Jackson then…

GOT WORMS?

THE BATTLING ANNELIDS RETURN TO THE DS AND PSP





Yes they're adorably cute but you wouldn't want to make them angry.

We were rather big fans of *Worms: Open Warfare* when THQ and Team 17 released it late last year. Granted, the DS version was rather uninspiring (especially when you consider the stylus should be perfect for it) but the PSP game was great fun and we constantly find ourselves returning to it on a regular basis. No more though, as a sequel is due to arrive very, very soon, and from what we've played of it, it's going to be even better than the first game.

With *Open Warfare* set across various timelines including World War I and II, Team 17 have added everything bar the kitchen sink to ensure that continual annelid annihilation remains as satisfying as ever. Several new multiplayer modes, 11 new weapons and the ability to play online are just a few of the extras that have been included and there's even a firing range that allows you to test weapons out before you enter battle.

Best of all though is that the DS version has been completely rebuilt from the ground up and plays like an absolute dream. Stylus control is quick and precise; the two screens mean it's far easier to select weapons and as a result of this, the gameplay has been greatly improved.

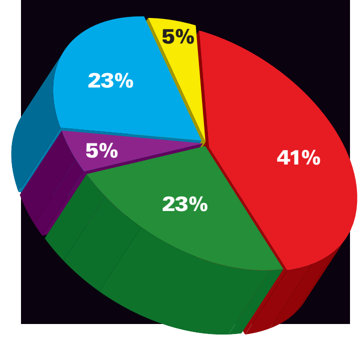
Look out for a review in the very next issue of Retro Gamer.

HOT TOPICS

BEST STREET FIGHTER

Which is your favourite version?

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior **41%**
Street Fighter III: Third Strike **23%**
Street Fighter Alpha **0%**
Street Fighter Alpha 2 **5%**
Street Fighter Alpha 3 **23%**
Street Fighter **5%**



OOP NORTH

SET YOUR DIARIES FOR ANOTHER CLASSIC RETRO EVENT

It's been rather quiet on the retro show front lately – either that or no one's been inviting us to any events – so we're rather pleased to discover that there's now another new event to look forward to.

Organised by Keith Lutener, Retro North will be dedicating an entire day to the wonders of retro gaming and will feature a variety of home computers and consoles to play on, as well as a staggering array of classic games to enjoy. Taking place on 25 August and based at the Glossop Rugby Union Football Club on the outskirts of Glossop, the show will cost £9 to enter, with all proceeds going to a very worth cause: Diabetes UK. As well as featuring plenty of machines to play on, there will be guest appearances from *Galaxian* World Record holder Gary Whelan and the Pickford Brothers who will be conducting a Q&A in the afternoon.



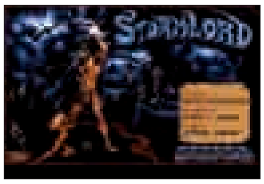
If you want to buy tickets or find out where Retro North is, head on over to www.retronorth.co.uk

There's even a bar (essential for retro events), so expect to see us propping it up from around 3pm onwards. Who knows, we might even bring Martyn Carroll along and get him to do his Borat impression…

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 21: STORM LORD

There's nothing better than a striking loading screen to get you pumping and *Storm Lord's* certainly got your pulse racing. While its strapping hero held a sword in one hand and lightning in the other, a tiny yet fully formed naked woman clutched his leg. It was far more exciting than the dull plodding gameplay that followed.



JUST IN IF YOU'RE A FAN OF THE MASTER SYSTEM, CHANCES ARE YOU REMEMBER A SCROLLING SHMUP CALLED CLOUD MASTER. GOOD NEWS, AN UPDATE IS NOW DUE TO APPEAR ON NINTENDO'S Wii.

X MARKS THE SPOT

MORE CLASSIC GAMES DUE TO HIT XBOX LIVE ARCADE

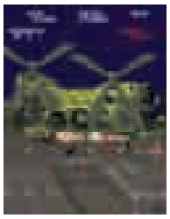


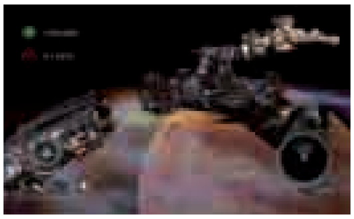
We're certainly being spoiled by Microsoft's download service at the moment. Not content with releasing classics like *Catan, Gyruss, Double Dragon* and *Xevious,* it's also revealed that several other titles are on the way.

The one we're most excited about is the long overdue announcement of an online *Bomberman*. While the lack of a full top-down view is a little disconcerting, familiar power-ups, online play and the ability to play against up to seven other players certainly makes up for it.

Sega's long overdue *Sonic The Hedgehog* has finally appeared on Partnernet and has been given a new lease of life thanks to some creative achievements and a new hi-def look, and we've also discovered that *Tron* and *Disks Of Tron* are on the way (no doubt to tie in with this year's 25th anniversary of the classic film).

Other titles to look forward to include Konami's *Track & Field, Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *Super Contra*, Electronic Arts' *Wing Commander Arena*, Jeff Minter's *Space Giraffe* and Ubisoft's *Prince Of Persia Classic*, which is so good it's got its own news story on page ten.





Just a selection of the great games heading to Xbox Live Arcade: *Super Contra, Wing Commander Arena* and *Space Giraffe* (top).

RETROVISION

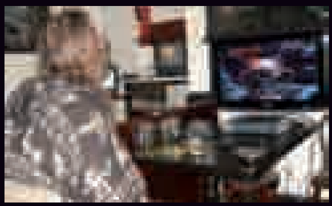
JEFF MINTER RIDES SPACE GIRAFFE

Videogames, beer and llamas. Three of our favourite things. Thus it took little persuading for RG to head down to the Port Mahon boozer in Oxford last month for the ninth RetroVision, a gathering of gamers with a shared predilection for the work of one Jeff Minter.

'I'm just another one of the guys here', said Jeff between sups of Guinness. 'Markie themes it as Llamasoft but I like the fact that there's loads of other retro goodness going on. I really enjoy it and people keep buying me drinks. It's impolite to say no…'



Warning: RetroVision may contain nuts.



Jeff Minter showboats on the very trippy *Space Giraffe*.

The hairy coder stayed sober enough to showcase his latest project, *Space Giraffe* and the psychedelic blaster (think *Tempest 3000* in a zoo) was one of the highlights of the weekend. The convivial atmosphere, game competitions, big screen *Guitar Hero* histrionics, bemusing auction and communal curry made this a truly unique event and left organiser Mark Rayson beaming from beneath his green face paint.

"We want to dedicate this event to the memory of SID musician Richard Joseph," explained Mark and collaborator Kenz from Back in Time. "Without guys like that, we wouldn't have the love that makes us do things like this."

Head to the Folly Bridge Inn, Oxford, February 2008 if you want to join the next love-in.

REMAKE ROUND-UP

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE HOME-BREW SCENE THIS MONTH

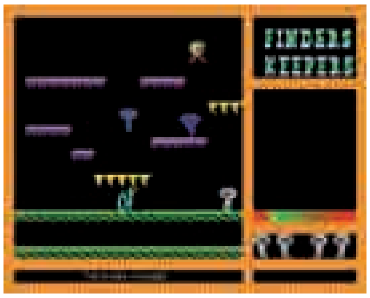
One of the great things about visiting Retro Remakes is that you never know quite what to expect. One minute a game that you loved playing in your youth is revealed, the next it's finished and three other titles have been announced.

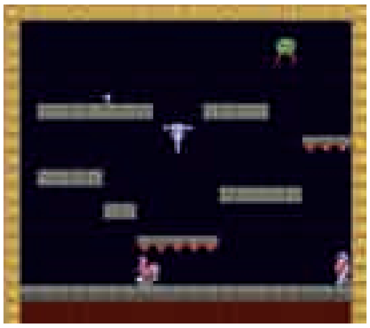
Games we've been paying particular interest to over the last month include Martin's excellent update of *Spindizzy*, which he first started working on in October 2006. Martin is now putting more time into the project and has seen a great increase in the game's speed since moving over to textures.

General Zod, on the other hand, is putting the final touches to his *Finders Keepers* remake and has given it quite a graphical overhaul since we last saw it – although if we're honest, we prefer his original Magic Knight as it looked more like the original.

While 8-bit games always feature highly in the remake stakes, that doesn't mean that more powerful machines don't get a look in and one of the latest we've discovered is Packer's update of *Conker's Bad Fur Day*.

There's still a very long way to go with this particular title and Packer is only focusing on the multiplayer aspect of the game, but what he has shown off so far is of a very impressive standard. With any luck it should be completed by the end of the year.





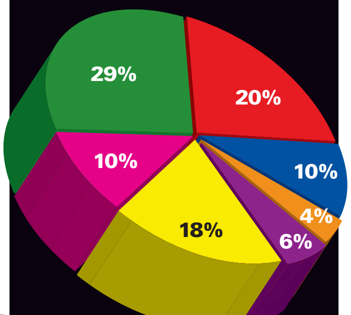
Before (top) and after screenshots of General Zod's *Finders Keepers* remake.

HOT TOPICS

FAVOURITE SCROLLING FIGHTER

Which one really kicks ass?

Streets Of Rage 2 **20%**
Target Renegade **10%**
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles **4%**
The Simpsons **6%**
Golden Axe **18%**
Kung Fu Master **10%**
Final Fight **29%**



GEOMETRY WARS



No, not an explosion in a paint factory but the brilliant *Geometry Wars*.

BIZARRE CREATIONS' GEOMETRY WARS HEADS TO THE DS AND WII

WII WARS

After wowing Xbox Live Arcade owners for the last year and a half, it would appear that Bizarre Creations' superb shooter *Geometry Wars* is now heading to Nintendo's Wii and DS.

Geometry Wars: Galaxies, as it will be known, is being developed by Kuju Entertainment and will offer multiplayer modes, an online leaderboard and the ability to unlock certain bonuses by linking a DS and Wii together.

While the Xbox Live Arcade original is a slice of utter brilliance, we can't help but ask ourselves why it's not appearing on Sony's PSP (the machine it's surely most suited for).

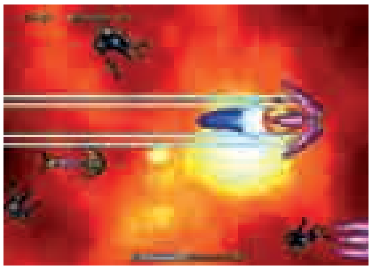
Still, a new *Geometry Wars* is better than none at all, so we'll definitely be keeping an eye on this one.

SÖLDNER, SÖLDNER

PLAY-ASIA ANNOUNCES NEW SHOOT-'EM-UP

Japanese games site Play-Asia, best known for providing gamers the world over with the latest imports, has recently announced that it will be funding a new game by German developers SideQuest Studios.

Söldner-X: Himmelsstürmer will be published and distributed by eastasiasoft and is a fast and furious shoot-'em-up featuring 12 huge levels of bullet mayhem. By the way, the name translates as 'Mercenary-X: Skystormer'.



Last Hope was the last Dreamcast shooter that was released, but wasn't very well received by fans.



An early image of the spacecraft that will be facing off against the enemies of SideQuest Studios' new game.

Play Asia is hoping that its new deal will bring seemingly lost game genres back into the home – and to be honest, if they're all going to be shoot-'em-ups then we're all for it (it's our favourite genre after all).

As well as the aforementioned 12 levels, *Söldner-X* is set to include a variety of hidden bonus features, 20 extras that will have both positive and negative effects on the gameplay and a unique upgrade weapon system along with the usual huge bosses to contend with.

While no platform has been announced yet, the news that it will sport a 720p HD mode suggests that it's unlikely to appear on Sega's Dreamcast and is set for a PC, PS3 or Xbox 360 release. *Söldner-X* is due for release in the fourth quarter of this year and will be reviewed in a later issue.

A GAMES LEGEND

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO IS VOTED ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

HELLO MOTO

Nintendo's most famous game designer, Shigeru Miyamoto was recently voted by TIME magazine as one of the most influential people in the world. Famous for saying "a delayed game is eventually good; a bad game is bad forever," Miyamoto has come a long way since the creation of *Donkey Kong* in 1981. Indeed, in the 26 years that have followed, Miyamoto has been involved in over 70 games, ranging from *F-Zero* on the SNES to *Wii Sports* and *The Legend Of Zelda: The Twilight Princess* for the Nintendo Wii – a staggering amount by anyone's standards.

Other notable additions to TIME's list included Steve Jobs, Michael J Fox, Pope Benedict XVI and Thierry Henry.

MORE FANTASIES

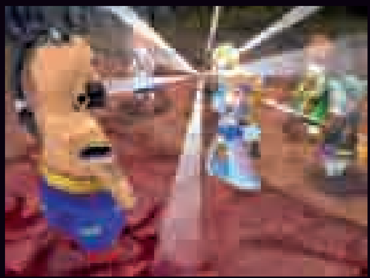
SQUARE ENIX REVEALS 3D UPDATE FOR FINAL FANTASY IV

Square Enix is certainly making the most of *Final Fantasy*'s 20th anniversary. Not content with releasing recent remakes of *Final Fantasys I – VI* on various systems, it has recently revealed that it's now developing another update of *Final Fantasy IV*, this time for the Nintendo DS.

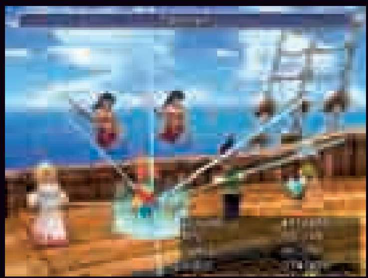
No doubt employing a similar 3D game engine to the rather spiffy remake of *Final Fantasy III* (which has only just been released in the UK), early screenshots suggest that it's going to be another must-have RPG – a genre that the DS is surprisingly light on.

It's not due out in Japan until next year, so don't hold your breath for a UK release. Just ask yourself why Square Enix seems content on remaking every *Final Fantasy* in its back catalogue apart from the one we all really want.





What is it with all these games getting announced with no screenshots? Here's another pic from *Final Fantasy III*.



Final Fantasy III may have been yet another remake, but when the quality's this good we're hardly going to moan about it.

R-TYPE, ONLY NOT

IREM ANNOUNCES CONFUSING NEW R-TYPE

When Irem announced that *R-Type Final* was to be the last game in the series, a little part of us died inside. Now, however, it would appear that the Japanese developer has been telling nothing but big fat pork pies, as a new game is once again in the works and is heading to the PSP.

Amazingly though, rather than being a traditional scrolling shoot-'em-up like past games in the series, it would appear that *R-Type Tactics* is a turn-based strategy game that once again has you facing off against the evil Bydo Empire.

While, it seems like an extremely odd road to travel down, but it's not the first time that a popular franchise has successfully moved into a brand new genre. Just look at Team Andromeda's *Panzer Dragoon Saga*.

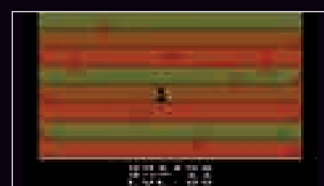


There are no screens of *R-Type Tactics* yet, so here's an image of the glorious original.

SOMETHING'S AMISS

BRAND NEW ATARI 2600 GAME ON THE WAY

He's not quite as prolific as Jonathan Cauldwell, but the name Bob Montgomery will be instantly familiar to you if you're a fan of the Atari 2600.



It's nice to see that the Atari 2600 is still alive and well. Expect a review in the very next issue.

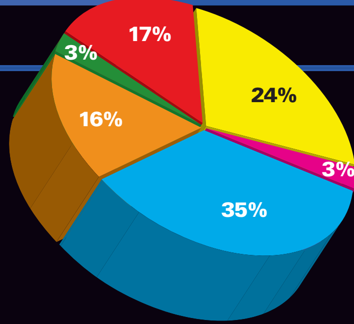
Montgomery is hard at work on a brand new title called *Elevators Amiss* and recently ran a competition for members of AtariAge to design its cover. Taking control of a hotel maid, your aim is to reach the top of each screen without getting crushed by the many elevators.

A demo of the game is currently available from http://www.atariage.com/features/contests/ElevatorsAmiss/ while a cartridge version of the completed game will be available for $20.

HOT TOPICS

MOST ICONIC FIGURE

Jack Tramiel **24%**
Sir Alan Sugar **3%**
Sir Clive Sinclair **35%**
Shigeru Miyamoto **16%**
Ralph Baer **3%**
Nolan Bushnell **17%**



PRINCE OF PERSIA



» Fighting is just as simple and elegant as it was in the original game. It's just a lot prettier.

RETURN OF THE KING

ACTUALLY IT'S PRINCE, BUT WE WANTED A LORD OF THE RINGS REFERENCE

Ubisoft has hired Gameloft to remake the original *Prince Of Persia*. And do you know what? It's absolutely brilliant.

Effectively a remake of the original Apple II game, *Prince Of Persia Classic* features stunning visuals – based on the popular PS2 game *The Sands Of Time* – a beautiful soundtrack and a prince who's now more agile than ever. As well as all his original moves, he's now able to jump off walls, do forward rolls and even pull off spectacular backflips. What's impressed us most, however, is how well these new moves have been integrated into the old levels. Everything feels incredibly natural and intuitive; so much so, in fact, that it felt they'd been there all along. Expect a glowing review next issue.

CLASSIC ADVERTS TO STIMULATE THE NOSTALGIA GLAND: THIS MONTH, ATARI COIN-OPS

THE GALLERY



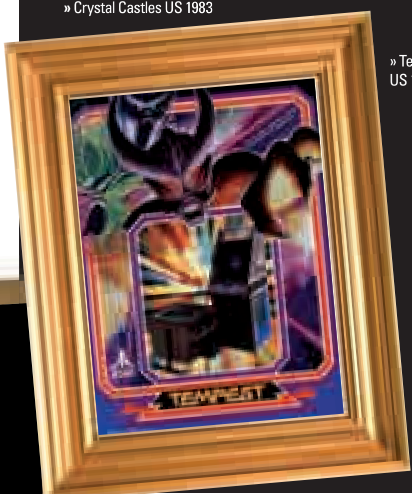
» Crystal Castles US 1983



» Missile Command US 1980



» Millipede US 1982



» Tempest US 1980



» Star Wars UK 1983



» I, Robot US 1983

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



BIG BOSS WILLY

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would Batman be without the Joker? What would Mario be without Bowser? Rubbish, that's what. This month: Big Boss Willy.

First appearance: *Double Dragon*

Distinguishing features: Bloody big machine gun

Weapon of choice: Bloody big machine gun

Most likely to: Shoot you with his bloody big machine gun

Least likely to: Give you his bloody big machine gun as a birthday present

Unusual fact: A movie was released in 1994 starring Robert Patrick, Scott Wolf and Mark Dacascos. Unsurprisingly, it wasn't very good.

DO IT YOURSELF

PLAY CARD FIGHTERS FOR REAL

Amazing what you can find on the internet, isn't it? After discovering Sonic The Hedgehog dioramas, learning how to fold the perfect paper Zelda and listening to our favourite Sega tunes at Radio Sega, we've now discovered one of the best fan projects of all.

The Card Fighters Project is Andy Thorson's attempt to recreate SNK's superb Neo-Geo Pocket title in full card form. Originally started back in 2002, the recent release of *SNK Vs Capcom Card Fighters* on the DS has persuaded Thorson to go back to his labour of love and get it finished once and for all. Which in our opinion is a good thing; for as much as we're enjoying the new DS game, it's not a patch on the Neo-Geo Pocket original.

So far, only the Capcom cards have been completed, but Thorson is hoping to have the rest of the cards finished by the end of August. Retro Gamer lunchtimes may never be the same again.

On the subject of *Card Fighters*, you may want to wait for the PAL release, as the US version has a crippling bug that stops you collecting all the cards.



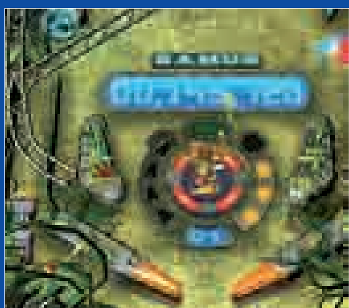
» We can't wait until the entire set is available for download.

RETRO GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING RETRO GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



JUNE 07

METROID PRIME PINBALL

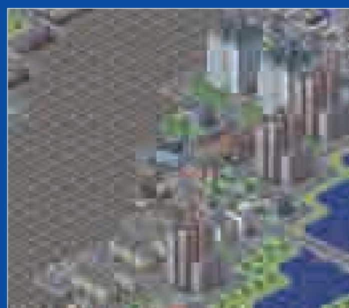
Released: 22 June

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

We first reviewed *Metroid Prime Pinball* back in issue 26, which should give you an idea of how long ago it was released in the US. Despite the lengthy delay, Nintendo's new pinball title is well worth getting hold of as it works perfectly. Fans of the *Metroid Prime* games will instantly recognise the game's many tables, while the two screens are perfect for showing off each table.



JUNE 07

SIM CITY DS

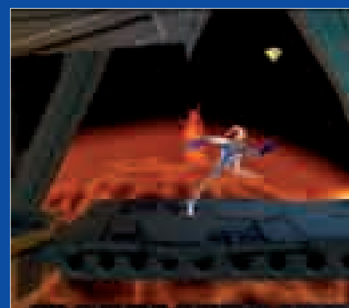
Released: 22 June

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Yes another classic strategy title turns up on Nintendo's dinky handheld. After impressing us with the wonderfully cute *Theme Park DS*, EA's next offering is city building sim *Sim City*. While the stylus controls are bound to ensure that *Sim City* plays like a proverbial dream, we're more interested in being able to use the microphone to put out raging infernos. Has the potential to be massive.



JUNE 07

EARTHWORM JIM

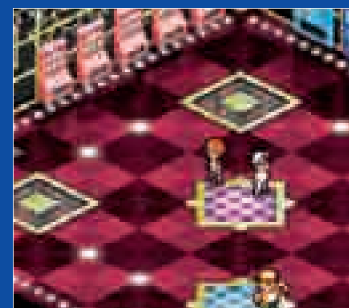
Released: 29 June

Publisher: Atari

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Whilst we've not managed to play Earthworm Jim's latest adventure, early screens and videos suggest that it could be a decent return to form. While the visuals have been updated, they do mimic the style of the original and seem to have captured its wacky sense of humour. There's also a two-player mode, although we're unsure at this time if it's co-operative or not.



JUNE 07

SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS

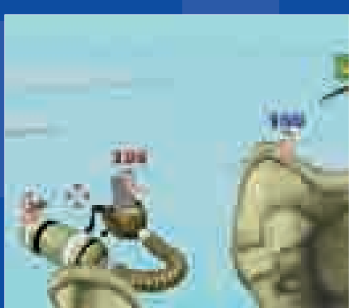
Released: 29 June

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

We've been playing the US version for a while now and apart from a crippling bug (which stops you from completing it), the actual game itself is pretty good fun. Granted, it's nowhere near as polished as the Neo-Geo Pocket original, but we're still mildly impressed with what SNK Playmore has achieved. Expect the definitive review very soon.



JULY 07

WORMS: OPEN WARFARE 2

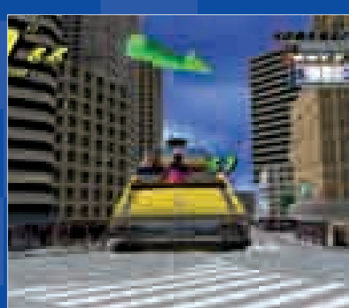
Released: July

Publisher: THQ

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, DS

While *Worms Open Warfare* was superb fun on the PSP, it was somewhat lacking on the DS. This time, though, that's all set to change, as an early play suggests that the DS sequel is set to fix all the little flaws that were present in the first game. Set over a variety of different time periods and with some superb visuals (particularly on the PSP version), *Open Warfare 2* promises to be very special.



JULY 07

CRAZY TAXI: FARE WARS

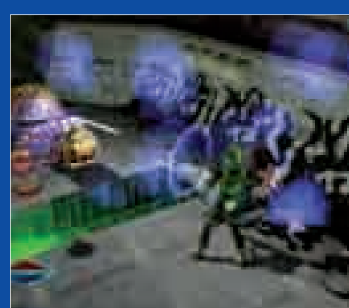
Released: July

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Crazy Taxi was one of our favourite Dreamcast games, so it's great to see that it's being shrunken down to fit onto Sony's PSP. Featuring elements from both *Crazy Taxi* and its Dreamcast-only sequel, *Crazy Taxi: Fare Wars* will be the first game in the franchise's history to offer a multiplayer mode and is bound to be a huge hit with fans of the original. Will The Offspring decide to make a return, though?



AUGUST 07

ALIEN SYNDROME

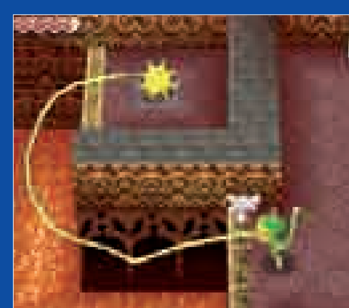
Released: 31 August

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, Wii

It may be one of Sega's more obscure coin-ops, but we're actually really looking forward to *Alien Syndrome*. While the original was basically a sci-fi take on *Gauntlet*, the PS2 update that was released under the Sega Ages banner was a rip-roaring blaster that we still occasionally return to. Early reports suggest that this new update will feature a similar blend of aliens, gunplay and slime. We can't wait.



DECEMBER 07

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: December

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

One of our most anticipated DS titles has slipped to December. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities, allowing for some competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus, this could well be the most distinctive *Zelda* yet.

HOME-BREW RATED

A VERTICALLY SCROLLING SCRAMBLE? IT'S A CHALLENGE WE CAN'T RESIST. NOR IS THE CHANCE TO ENJOY A WARLORDS UPDATE...

CONQUEST OF MARS

ROCK HARD BLASTER TO TEST YOU

Those dastardly Martians are plotting another attack on the Earth and are planning to launch several high-powered bombs at our planet. It is your task to pilot a ship down to the bottom of six caverns, activate the bomb present and escape before it blows up. In the process you must shoot or avoid the cavern defences, ensure you don't run out of fuel and stay alive no matter what. The easiest way *Conquest Of Mars* can be described is akin to a vertically scrolling version of *Scramble*. The caverns are fairly narrow and must be negotiated carefully, and your firing system is quite powerful, a twin shot every time; but to complicate matters, you can't fire again until both shots have disappeared.

The variety of defences present, which increase in number in line with the skill level, are challenging to defeat and will certainly test most players. Easy the game most certainly is not. In the beginning it may seem highly annoying how easy it is to die. But the more you play, the more about how the mechanics work becomes evident and your skill level will increase in not getting destroyed. *Conquest Of Mars* dares you to try and beat it, and it manages to successfully tread that thin line between addiction and frustration. Behind the simple graphics is a game well worth playing.

FORMAT: ATARI 2600
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
WRITTEN BY: JOHN CHAMPEAU
PUBLISHED BY: ATARIAGE
LINK: HTTP://WWW.ATARIAGE.COM
PRICE: US$25 (PAL OR NTSC)
REVIEWED BY: MAT ALLEN





» Squeeze your ship through the narrow caverns..



RATING: **85%**

MEDIEVAL MAYHEM

LET THE MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM COMMENCE

retro GAMER SIZZLER

Anyone old enough to have owned an Atari 2600 back in the day would surely have had *Warlords* in their games roster. It was one of those 'pure play' experiences. Armed with nothing more than a paddle, each of four friends could backstab and destroy each other for hours on end. However, those who managed to play the original coin-op couldn't help but notice there were a number of differences in the conversion.

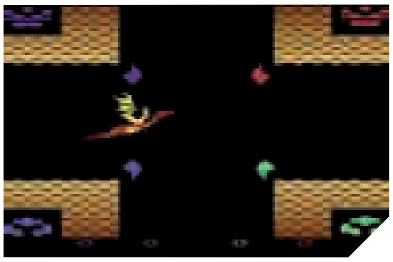
Differences no more, as *Medieval Mayhem* steps into the fray. Taking a lead from the earlier *Castle Crisis*, this is as close to the original play experience as you can get on the humble 2600, with a few improvements. The range of customisation available is staggering, allowing games to be finely balanced and tuned; among other aspects, the random dragon ball launch and hypnotic multi-ball carnage that ensues near the end of each round are fully in place.

As simple a game as *Medieval Mayhem* is in concept, it provides a hugely entertaining multiplayer experience of immense longevity. The colourful graphics and chunky sound effects are mere icing on the cake of this excellent game, one that deserves to be a part of your collection. *Warlords* aficionados are urged to purchase forthwith; those who missed out before should definitely consider delving into what is a stonewall classic.

RATING **90%**

FORMAT: ATARI 2600
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
WRITTEN BY: DARRELL SPICE JR
PUBLISHED BY: ATARIAGE
LINK: HTTP://WWW.ATARIAGE.COM
PRICE: US$25 (PAL OR NTSC)
REVIEWED BY: MAT ALLEN





» *Medieval Mayhem* enhances the *Warlords* experience.

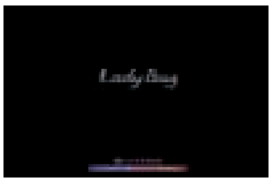


LADYBUG FLIES ONTO THE 2600 AT LONG LAST. AND AN ENHANCED PC VERSION OF THRUST WILL BLOW YOU AWAY

LADYBUG

COLLECTING FLOWERS HAS NEVER BEEN SO EXCITING

FORMAT: ATARI 2600
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
WRITTEN BY: JOHN CHAMPEAU
PUBLISHED BY: ATARIAGE
LINK: HTTP://WWW.ATARIAGE.COM
PRICE: US$25 (PAL OR NTSC)
REVIEWED BY: MAT ALLEN



The *Ladybug* arcade machine was a curio, part *Pac-Man* part bonus junkie, with all the splendour and extra features that Universal liked to tag into their games. And whilst the Colecovision conversion of it proved popular, it never made it as far as the Atari 2600 despite being advertised – something John Champeau was determined to fix.

It is testament to programmers today that they are able to produce games that scarcely would have seemed possible 20 years ago. *Ladybug* on the 2600 not only has all the features and strategy of the original game, but it even almost looks and sounds the same as well. Beneath the supposed 'collect all the flowers' exterior lies a surprising amount of strategy as you attempt to avoid all the bugs by flipping the maze doors to block their path, or lead them into the poison to return them to base temporarily.



» Be cool as a cucumber: you'll get 1,000 points for one.

Detractors would probably argue why you should bother buying this when you can play the game in MAME, but that would be missing the point. The point was to prove it was possible and create a playable, fun and enjoyable game at the same time, a task that was a success on all fronts. It certainly has encouraged me to spend more time with a game that never got much attention from myself back in the day, and that can only be a good thing.

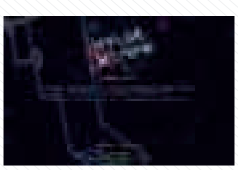
RATING: 80%



THRUST EXTREME

EDIT YOUR OWN LEVELS AND MORE

FORMAT: PC
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
WRITTEN BY: WIEBO DE WIT
LINK: HTTP://WIEBO.WORDPRESS.COM/
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: MAT ALLEN



For a game inspired by an existing coin-op (*Gravitar*), *Thrust* has had a remarkably long life, though fully deserved because of its precision of execution and maddeningly addictive qualities. More than 20 years on, it still comes back for more.

Thrust Extreme is an extension of the previous *Thrust Deluxe* by the same author, and you certainly get a lot of game for your zero money. In addition to recreations of the original six levels, there are the six deluxe levels and two new extreme levels to conquer, all lovingly rendered in beautifully glowing smooth moving vectors. *Extreme* is a little more forgiving than its original parent: barrels give a bit more fuel, the tractor beam is a little wider, the pod not so rigidly attached to the tractor line, making this a fairer and not-so-crushing game to play if you haven't *Thrust*-ed before but still maintaining the turn-on-a-dime controls in the process.



» Just look at those gorgeous vector graphics.

Not only can the selection of levels played be altered to suit, but the author has also thrown in an object and level editor with the package; assuming the latter was used to create the levels present, the only limit is your own creativity. Utterly spellbinding.

RATING: 95%



retro GAMER SIZZLER

IS IT ROBOTRON? IS IT GEOMETRY WARS? NO, BUT IT'S ANOTHER SLICK SHOOTER. AND A CLASSIC CUTESY PLATFORMER GETS A REMAKE

VECK S.E.

WHAT THE VECK? WHAT A BLAST!



On first view you will probably think that *Veck* is very much like *Geometry Wars* and you wouldn't be far wrong. Certainly both of those games owe a lot to *Robotron* and come from the same school of vector enemy design, with dual stick controls used to batter an increasing swathe of enemies into oblivion.

After that point they happen to diverge. *Veck* changed the template in that it is divided into one-minute time-slices, whereupon your firepower, rate and hardness of the enemies increase proportionally. You also have an energy level that increases the more you move about and naturally decreases if you get hit. Thereupon the strategy required to survive and destroy is subtly altered and becomes as much a matter of weaving about to boost your energy as it is killing things. Despite the sheer number of bullets flying about after a few minutes, the action never slows or judders: it's smooth blasting all the way which is a definite plus. Backed by a pseudo trance-style music track, *Veck* maintains the same compelling challenge as its competitors but makes things a little different in its execution, and hence becomes both fairer and more ruthless at the same time. If you enjoy this sort of game, this is a recommendation to try *Veck* out as well.

FORMAT: PC
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
WRITTEN BY: AYDEN WOLF
LINK: HTTP://SMAYDS.COM/GAMES/VECK/
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: MAT ALLEN





» Unleashing a hail of bullets to keep the enemy ships at bay.

RATING: 85%

QWAK

YOU'D HAVE TO BE QWAKKERS TO GIVE THIS CUTESY PLATFORMER A MISS. GET IT QUICK BEFORE THEY RUN OUT

FORMAT: GAME BOY ADVANCE
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
WRITTEN BY: JAMIE WOODHOUSE
LINK: HTTP://WWW.QWAK.CO.UK
PRICE: £15
REVIEWED BY: MAT ALLEN



The original *Qwak* was released on the Amiga by Team 17 during the early Nineties to positive reviews. Now the programmer Jamie Woodhouse has converted it to the Game Boy Advance and given a new set of gamers the chance to relive those heady 16-bit days.

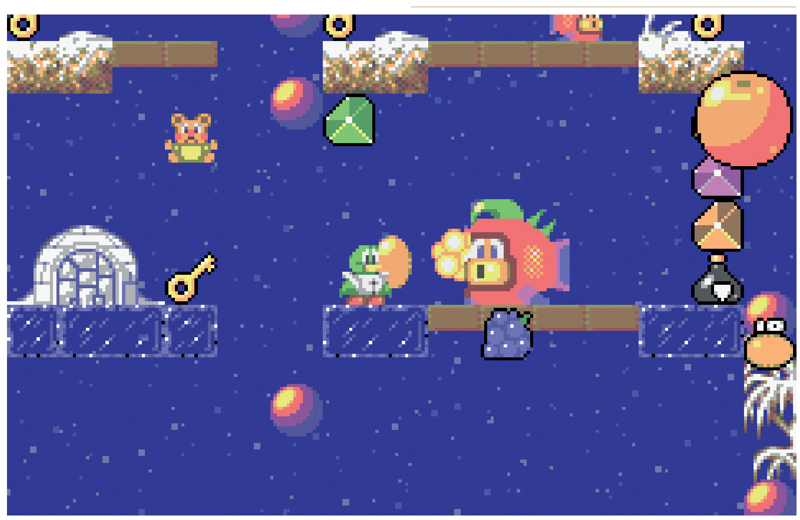
As this is pretty much a direct conversion, the game inherits all the character, charm and chaos of the original, along with all the positives and negatives of its design.

On each level you must collect all the keys to open the exit whilst avoiding or shooting the bad guys with the limited number of eggs you can collect. There are bonuses galore to be discovered and plenty of power-ups to acquire. The sheer range can be confusing to begin with, and the game most certainly is difficult from the off, which was par for the course back in the time of the original release. However, through repeated play, *Qwak* ends up burying itself a little bit in your heart; maybe it's the cuteness of the main character or the demand to just keep on playing and get one more level further. It's not unduly unfair, just a challenge… if you are up to it. For a mere 15 quid and the fact that there will only be 300 copies made, it seems silly not to give it a go.

RATING 85%



» Getting fruity with a whole load of bonuses.



THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER!

WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

Dear Darran,
What on earth were you thinking of when you created the favourite 8-bit poll on the Retro Gamer forums?

I can see your reasoning behind putting it up, but you must have known that it would have eventually ignited and would run out of control. When I last looked it was 55 pages long and while there were some interesting arguments to be found in there, the majority of the posts are simply along the lines of 'Spectrum rules, C64 sucks'. Pretty childish I'm sure you'll agree.

I got bored of all these arguments the first time around when I was still at school, and now I'm a mature adult I certainly don't want to hear these childish, insane ramblings again. Each machine has its own strengths and weaknesses, so why can't we just all play nice and just share our love of retro gaming, irrespective of what platform it's actually on?
Michael, Andover.

We felt that the forum members were mature enough to make sensible, constructive posts, which the majority are. Sadly, it went tits up when people from other forums started signing up to vote for their favourite machines. Have a binder and T-shirt for trying to spread harmony through the retro world.



» Michael just wants everyone to get along, but we all know that this is the computer that should have won.

STOP THE SPECTRUM LOVE

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to drop a quick line to say that while I love the magazine, I'm frustrated by all the ZX-mania that appears in it. I mean, come on guys, we know you love the thing to bits, and that it was hugely popular in the UK, but please, PLEASE, do try to limit the ZX screenshots and offer screens from other machines instead. I can't see the point in covering games that came out on all systems and only using Spectrum shots to illustrate them. It gets even weirder when you talk about certain games and then start saying that it was much better, say, than the Amstrad or C64 offerings.

Aw, c'mon, you can do better than that. If nothing else, it just gives a one-sided slant to your articles, and gets boring for the rest of us who didn't witness the miracle that was colour clashing first-hand.

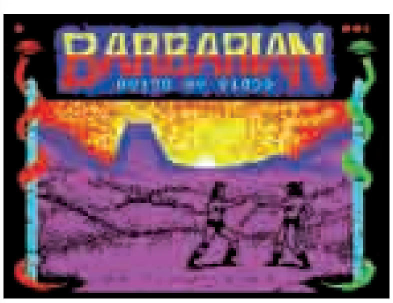
So, in future, I'd like to see screenshots from multiple systems (the more, the better) for each game you feature. Oh, and of course please do state which machine the screenshot comes from – maybe you could use an appropriate small logo in one corner of the screenshot?

Cheers,
Themis via email

I think you're being a little harsh here Themis. We've looked over the last four issues off the magazine and only two features are made up predominately of Spectrum screenshots (the Makings of Turbo Esprit *and* Thanatos*). We'll certainly take what you've said into consideration though and will try to ensure that more screenshots from a variety of different systems are used in the future.*



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy Retro Gamer T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a Sega Mega Drive Plug 'N Play pack. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…



» We'd imagine that Themis will be pretty riled after seeing this Spectrum screenshot.



» While a great many readers loved the Gaming Illuminati feature, Mark from Stafford wasn't one of them.

NO MORE HEROES

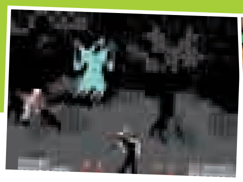
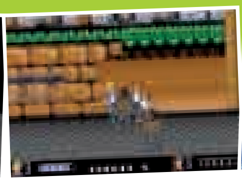
Dear Retro Gamer,
I've been following Retro Gamer ever since your first issue, but the two-part Gaming Illuminati article by John Szczepaniak that appeared in issues 35 and 36 was a very disappointing read.

Although there was nothing wrong with the actual writing, and it was obvious that a lot of care and research had been put into the subject, the article itself painted the sad individuals inside as modern-day messiahs and it came across like John was totally in awe of the idiots he was writing about.

Everyone involved in the interview appeared to be nothing more than extremely sad losers, who had far too much money and time on their hands, and yet, the article was making them out to be important individuals who acted like a modern-day Indiana Jones. These people haven't changed the world, they've not found a cure a cancer, and they're certainly not worth 12 pages of my favourite videogame magazine, they're just very, very sad.

It's obvious that the shadowy world these people inhabit greatly interests John, but I feel he's missed the mark in how he represented them.

And I thought Star Trek fans were sad gits…
Mark, Stafford




Ouch Mark, you certainly don't hold back any punches do you? We're sorry that you didn't like the article (John still feels it's the best piece he's ever written) but laying into the people involved is a little harsh. After all, we've all got our hobbies and just because theirs is a little more involved than a normal gamer's that doesn't mean they should be singled out for it.

PITFALL PONDERING

Dear Retro Gamer,
Whilst reading through your fantastic issue 37 from cover to cover (something that only Retro Gamer demands of me) I found myself looking closely at one of the *Pitfall!* screenshots that appeared on page 56. If you look, the higher of the two screens shows three Pitfall Harrys standing around a water cooler (or are they enjoying a nice cup of tea?) whilst a fourth is running in at speed from the right, perhaps worried he's missing out on the cakes. I laughed myself silly for a moment and then started wondering who had doctored the screen and why.

I've posted a thread about this on the forum, but so far there's been a large number of views but no actual responses. Perhaps you can ask the author of the piece to shed some light on it for me?
DK, Yateley



» If you're the mystery *Pitfall!* Photoshopper we'd love to hear from you.

Glad to hear you're enjoying the magazine DK. As for your Pitfall! *query, this is what David Crookes has to say on the subject. "I spotted it on the internet about two years ago and it really made me laugh. I thought it would make the readers smile too – and hopefully flush out the Photoshopper who created it because he really deserves a pat on the back."*

Let's hope the mystery Photoshopper gets in touch with us, because we'd love to see what else he's tinkered with in the past.

MORE MAG DISSECTIONS

Dear Retro Gamer,
I have been enjoying reading the magazine

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES IN THE MAG. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW: WHAT WAS THE FIRST GAME YOU EVER COMPLETED?

ID: Bub&Bob
Bubble Bobble on C64 with my cousin & I. Took many attempts though!

ID: MikeHaggar
Bump 'n' Jump on the Atari 2600. Played it for 10 or so hours straight. Think it fried my machine too, it wouldn't turn on the next day.

ID: LeeT
Willow Pattern Adventure (C64) – Far from easy but it was such a good game, it was worth the perseverance.

ID: Duddyroar
Dungeon Master on the Atari ST. I nearly filled my pants in fear several times during the process. I was only young, after all.

ID: James Bond
You know what, I cannot remember. It might have been *Super Mario World* on the SNES.

ID: Wils
Ghostbusters on my mate's C64. Strangely, this coincided with the first time I remember swearing profusely at a game, thanks to the 'reward' of a page of text for finally getting two blokes past that bastard Mr StayPuft. Huzzah(!)

ID: silversmurfer
Mine was an old PC space / resource game called Millenium - anyone remember that?

ID: alain91
Forbidden Forest! Played it on a rainy day. Great game, music...

ID: Emperor Fossil
Commando on the C64, except it just keeps looping, so it doesn't really count.

ID: neueregel
If my memory serves me well, it was *Terrormolinos*, a text adventure by Melbourne House sometime around 1986 or '87. It actually introduced me to the genre that I continue to cherish to this day!

ID: savva0122
Hunchback by Ocean on the CBM64. Boy was I disappointed when you started again!

ID: Xesh
Citadel on the Elk. That was a marathon game session as it doesn't include a save game feature. And I completed it with the 99 point maximum.

ID: davidbradforth
Repton on the Electron… then *Repton* on the BBC. then *Repton* on the Archimedes. In fact, I enjoyed *Repton* so much I'd ultimately take over publication of the Archimedes version.

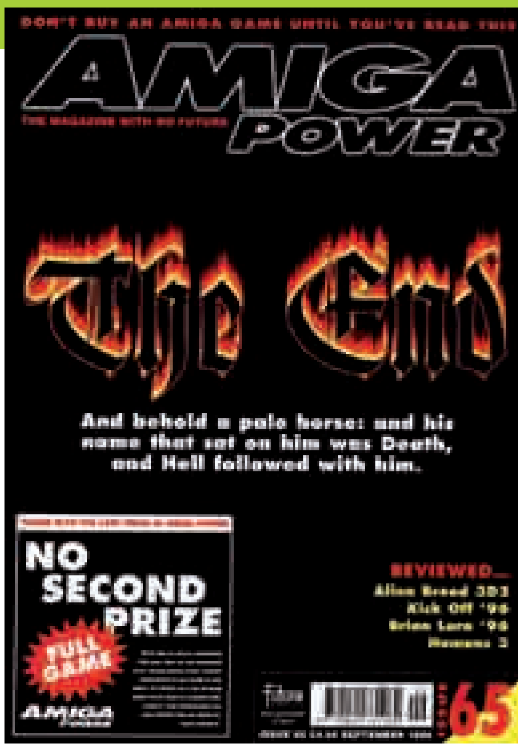
ID: Imperial Walker
I think the first game I ever completed was *Henry's House* on the C64. I was close to completing the *Ghostbusters* on the C64!

ID: sleeper77
In the arcade, *After Burner*. That's because my mate's dad worked in my local one and gave me 20+ credits for free.

ID: Heavy Stylus
Double Dragon on the Atari ST. I was about eleven years old and completed it on my first go. Now, I'm pretty crap at beat-'em-ups in general, so by my reckoning the game must be censored easy.

ID: Celebaglar
Heroes of Karn from Interceptor for the C64. Horrible parser, excruciatingly slow-drawing graphics (yet strangely mesmerising) and some good atmospheric tunes, but it was the first game I bought, played and eventually completed on the C64.

THE RETRO FORUM



» The very last issue of Amiga Power. Maybe there will be a feature about it in a future issue (Amiga Power that is, not just the last issue).

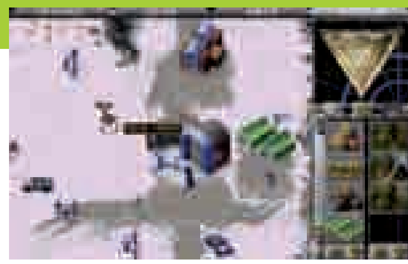
for several months now. I've had great fun playing videogames since I was knee-high to a, well, to an adult height knee, and your magazine captures that spirit wonderfully.

It's also reminded me of how much I've missed reading an intelligent, funny games magazine that really cares about its subject. For me, and I suspect many other gamers, the magazines of the time were as much a part of the gaming scene as the games themselves. (I can remember going around to a mate's house to read Your Sinclair, just as he would come round to mine to read Amstrad Action.) Is there any chance Retro Gamer might revisit some of these classic titles? (In a more in-depth way than the current Back to the Eighties section.)

Surely it wouldn't be too hard to persuade Stuart Campbell to rant libellously about Amiga Power or Your Sinclair for a few pages?

Keep up the Retro work!
Andrew Bell, Dalkeith

When we first put Retro Gamer together, we wanted to create a magazine that was not only informative, but wasn't afraid to have a little fun with its readers. Based on the numerous letters and emails we've been receiving we seem to be reaching that goal. So thanks for the kind words of support.



» *Command & Conquer: Red Alert.* A PC classic that you can revisit thanks to DOS Box.

As for getting Stuart to rant about Amiga Power? We'll just have to ask him when he's not neck deep in definitives.

PC TEETHING PROBLEMS

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to say a very quick thanks for constantly putting together a fantastic magazine every month. I'm very glad I've now subscribed, but a little sad that finding back issues via eBay remains so expensive.

Anyway, the main reason why I wanted to get in touch with you is because I'm in need of some advice. After years of not having any use for a PC, I now have two of the blighters, so I've decided to start tracking down all the stuff I've ever wanted that never made it to a home console. So far I've picked up titles like *Alien Vs Predator 2*, *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*, *Tiberium Sun* and *Laser Squad: Nemesis*. What's causing me problems though is getting the really old games to work.

I blindly bought *Alien Vs Predator: Gold*, as the box stated it was XP compatible, but annoyingly it isn't. I'm also desperate to try the likes of *XCOM 3*, *Realms Of The Haunting* and *System Shock* but I can't seem to get any of them to work.

Ideally, I'd like to know how I'd go about playing these classic titles on my new PC and if you could perhaps do a mini-feature that would explain this to me and any other readers who might be having issues.

Best Regards,
Ross Sillifant

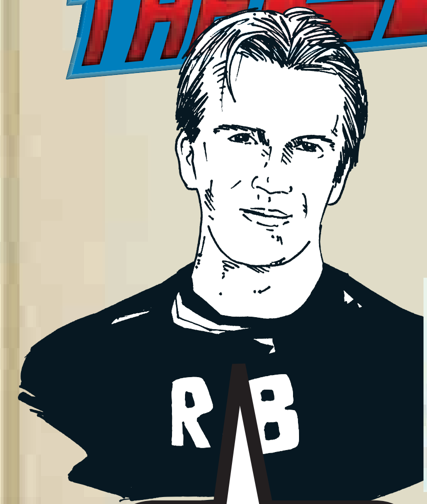
We totally sympathise with you Ross, as we were recently in a very similar situation. Your best bet is to download DOS Box, an open source system that effectively lets you emulate an older PC. It takes a fair while to work your way around but all the information can be easily found at the following website…

http://dosbox.sourceforge.net/news.php?show_news=1

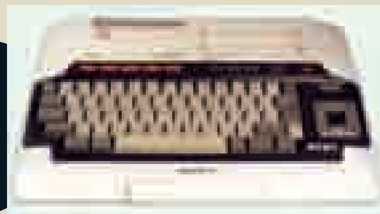
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BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JUNE 1983



July 1983 – the MSX invasion gathers pace, the Famicom arrives in Japan, Atari gets supercharged, Rignall reigns supreme, Crash is born, the Sinclair Microdrive gets a release date and Ultimate bakes off a damn fine Cookie.



» With a swathe of companies producing an array of compatible machines, would the Japanese machines conquer the UK computer market?

The first inklings that the big Japanese electronics producers might be preparing to invade the UK with a range of compatible systems began to filter through to the media with news that companies such as Sony and Toshiba had subscribed to a new computer standard as defined by American software giant, Microsoft.

The MSX format, which would cover both software and hardware ranges, would feature several different machines produced by a number of companies (as many as 16 were initially involved) with a view to producing high-specification, low-priced systems that were all completely compatible with each other. Software would be interchangeable between each machine, with titles being made available on cassette, disk and ROM cartridge formats.

With the development know-how and financial muscle behind these huge Japanese companies, the MSX, at that time, was seen as a very real threat to virtually all UK home-bred systems. The MSX format would later be advertised as 'the format of the future'. Only time would tell if the Japanese computer invasion was going to be a successful one.

Not such a big threat but another new Japanese arrival to the UK computing world was the Sharp MZ700. The computer would cost a smidge under £250.



» Nintendo released the Famicom onto the Japanese gaming world (NES to follow, Westerners!) and we never looked back…

In Japan itself, 15 July saw the release of a new console by Nintendo: the Famicom – shortened from 'Family Computer'. There were three games available at launch: *Donkey Kong*, *Popeye* and *Donkey Kong Jnr*.

Although not an immediate success, due mainly to a product recall, once the teething problems were rectified the new console sold by the container load, reportedly shifting 500,000 units in the first two months.

It took a further two years for the US equivalent, the NES, to reach American shores and another year to finally become available in Europe.

The newly crowned Video Arcade Game Champion for 1983 was an 18-year-old urchin going by the name of Julian Rignall. The competition, organised by Computer & Video Games magazine, saw over 500 of the country's sweaty-fisted button-pounding joystick manipulators battling it out with one eye on the title and the other firmly fixed on the new arcade machine they would receive as champion.

The initial heats, played over several months, saw six games chosen for the competition with the best three scores on each machine meeting in the London-based final. The six best scorers on each machine on the day then progressed to the final showdown – a play-off on a brand new, as of then, unreleased game called *Gyruss* by Taitel.

Julian qualified for the final with an impressively thumb-numbing score of 5,248,520 on *Defender* and then narrowly won the *Gyruss* contest with a score of 73,100. Quite what became of the fresh-faced gaming wizard no-one quite knows…

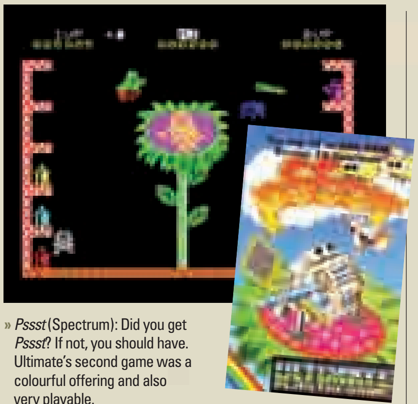
With fewer actual sightings than a Microdrive-shaped UFO being piloted by a Yeti wearing Nordic slippers, the fabled, almost mythical, Sinclair storage system finally, it was reported, would be available via mail order and in certain stores by early August.

Many an eyebrow was arched with scepticism as the enigmatic device of black plasticness had suffered multiple false starts and delays since the prototype design was first seen in April 1982. Everyone waits…

A brand new software mail order company was accepting catalogue requests and orders for the first time this month. The three partners, Roger Kean, Franco Frey and his



» Franco Frey and Roger Kean do battle with one of Oliver Frey's monsters in this Crash promotional picture.



» *Psst* (Spectrum): Did you get *Psst?* If not, you should have. Ultimate's second game was a colourful offering and also very playable.

brother Oliver Frey, set up Crash Micro Games Action, which planned to initially sell Spectrum games through its new software catalogue, with other formats being catered for should the venture take off.

Of course, Crash Micro Games Action did take off in spectacular fashion when their catalogue eventually morphed into the Spectrum gamesters' bible. After two editions of their software catalogue, the first newsstand issue of Crash magazine was finally released onto the shelves of John Menzies in February 1984. The Newsfield Publications empire was born…

Bug Byte Software had been working overtime again, announcing several new games ready for release on the BBC and Spectrum. The Beeb got *Sea Lord*, *Oblivion* and *Old Father Time* whilst the Spectrum received *Aquarius* and *Styx*. The latter was written by Bug Byte's new boy and resident scruff-bag, Matthew Smith. The company also hinted that he was extremely close to completing work on an exciting new treasure-gathering platform game for the Spectrum entitled *Manic Miner*. Should be good…

With the huge success enjoyed by *Jet Pac* and the favourable reaction to *Pssst*, Ultimate Play The Game revealed its next two titles to the Spectrum gaming population.



» The impending release from Ultimate looked set to continue the company's impressive debut. Just wait for *Sabre Wulf*…



» The Supercharger was a cunning little device that expanded your Atari 2600 and its gaming capabilities. Looked a bit like 8-track cartridge though.

Surprisingly for a newly formed company, Ultimate had rapidly gained such a reputation for producing high-quality software that its next two titles, *Cookie* and *Tranz Am*, were already being eagerly awaited by Spectrum owners.

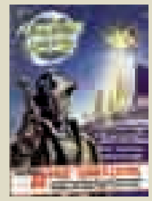
An ingenious little add-on for the Atari 2600 arrived with a whimper rather than a fanfare, mainly due to receiving minimal coverage of its release. A real pity, as the Starpath Supercharger was a natty expansion module which upped the Atari's RAM from just 128 bytes to a mind-blowing 6272 bytes. With this extra bit of oomph, games producers could create faster games with higher-resolution graphics. The Supercharger was an oddity in as much as it was an expansion module that turned the cartridge-based Atari into a tape-based software machine. The Supercharger connected to a standard tape deck via a cable to the earphone socket. Several Supercharger games had already been created and were standing by for release, including *Phasor Patrol*, which came free with the module, and the imaginatively titled *Communist Mutants From Space*. The Supercharger would set you back £39.95 while the cassette-based games would be priced at £19.95 each.

The ongoing palaver with the Atari copyright court case concerning



» Another new Ultimate release this month was *Tranz Am* for the Spectrum. Thankfully David Hasselhoff is nowhere to be seen…

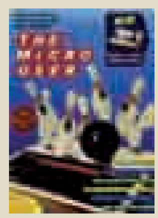
WHAT THE MAGAZINES WERE SAYING…



Computer & Video Games

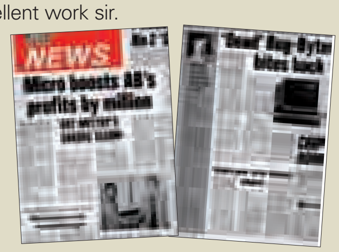
C&VG's regular arcade feature focused on how the Americans love to set every arcade high score record going and listed many of feats. No doubt some of those obscenely massive scores have stood the test of time and still remain valid today. Maybe we should've sent new C&VG arcade champion Julian Rignall to sort them out…

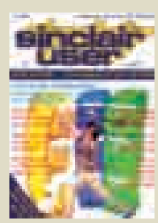




The Micro User

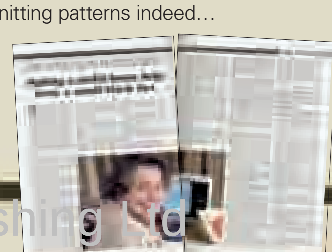
The Acorn-dedicated magazine turned its news page into a tabloid-newspaper-style layout leading with a story reporting that Bug Byte Software had disbanded. This exclusive came from Kansas (the software house not US state) whose insider revealed the source of this stunner, stating, "I'm sure I read it in a magazine." Excellent work sir.





Sinclair User

Sinclair User continued its 'User of the Month' feature highlighting another mildly eccentric individual and what they use their machine for. This month, Mrs Sims talked about her ZX81 and the potential for using it with knitting and embroidery patterns. NO!, ditch the wool and play *3D Monster Maze*… knitting patterns indeed…

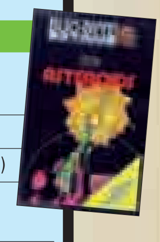


CHARTS

JUNE 1983

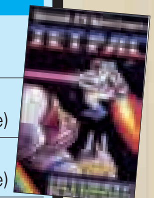
VIC-20

1. Asteroids (Bug Byte)
2. Panic (Bug Byte)
3. Arcadia (Imagine)
4. Wacky Waiters (Imagine)
5. Cosmiads (Bug Byte)



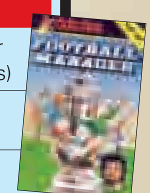
SPECTRUM

1. Jet Pac (Ultimate)
2. Penetrator (Melbourne House)
3. The Hobbit (Melbourne House)
4. Flight Simulation (Psion/Sinclair)
5. Transylvanian Tower (Richard Shepherd)



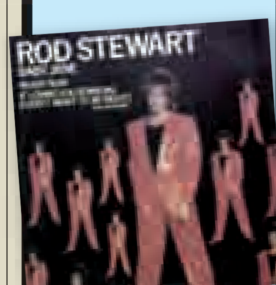
ZX81

1. Football Manager (Addictive Games)
2. Flight Simulation (Sinclair/Psion)
3. Fantasy Games (Sinclair/Psion)
4. Defender (Quicksilva)
5. 1K Games (Artic)



MUSIC SINGLES CHART JUNE '83

1. Baby Jane (Rod Stewart)
2. Wherever I Lay My Hat (Paul Young)
3. I.O.U. (Freeez)
4. Moonlight Shadow (Mike Oldfield)
5. Flashdance… What A Feeling (Irene Cara)



BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

R.B

NEWS

JULY 1983

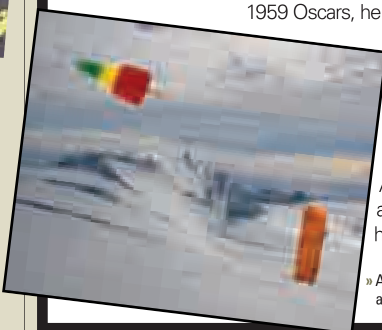
On 21 July, a record low temperature was recorded at Vostok, a Soviet research station in Antarctica. Armed with a platinum thermometer, 34 pairs of thermal undergarments and a steaming cup of Bovril, station superintendent Arnold Budretsky recorded a temperature of -128.6 Fahrenheit or -89.2 Celsius. Not a day to be wearing flip-flops and hanky hats…

16 July saw Britain's worst helicopter crash. A Sikorsky S-61 crashed into the sea as it was approaching the Isles of Scilly off the coast of Cornwall. The pilots lost their bearings and flew into the sea. A total of 20 people were killed although both pilots survived.

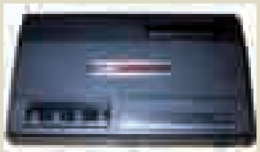
Actor and moustachioed actor/gentleman, David Niven, died on 29 July aged 73. Aside from winning a Best Actor award at the 1959 Oscars, he is probably most fondly remembered for playing the quintessential English spy, James Bond, in the 1967 spoof movie, *Casino Royale*.

In movieland, *Staying Alive*, the sequel to *Saturday Night Fever* and, rather strangely, written and directed by one Sylvester Stallone, deposes *Return Of The Jedi* as the number one movie in America. However, it only managed a solitary week at the top before being ousted by the unintentionally hilarious gag-fest that was *Jaws 3D*.

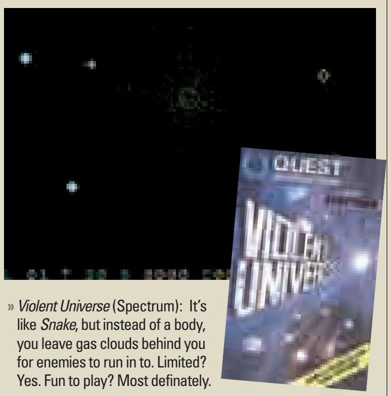




» A record low temperature in Antarctica led to outbreaks of fish fingers and Zoom lollies roaming free…



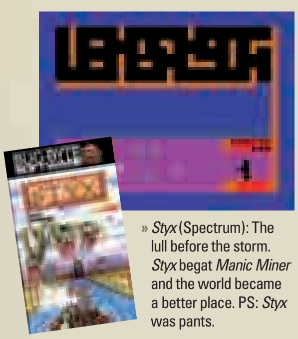
» If you can beat them, cheat them. The Coleco Gemini, the first of several cloned Atari 2600 machines entering the marketplace.



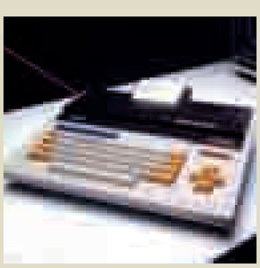
» *Violent Universe* (Spectrum): It's like *Snake*, but instead of a body, you leave gas clouds behind you for enemies to run in to. Limited? Yes. Fun to play? Most definately.



» *Communist Mutants From Space* (Atari 2600): one of the new games for the Starpath Supercharger expansion module for the old Atari woody.



» *Styx* (Spectrum): The lull before the storm. *Styx* begat *Manic Miner* and the world became a better place. PS: *Styx* was pants.



» If the impending wave of MSX-ness didn't grab you, there was the Sharp MZ700 with built-in toilet roll dispenser, as an alternative.

Imagic's *Demon Attack* game and how it looked vaguely like one of Atari's, thus far, unreleased efforts, finally came to a conclusion when both sides decided to settle out of court.

Atari fared little better with the lawsuit it had served against Coleco and its Atari Expansion Module which allowed VCS games to be played on its Colecovision machine. Coleco prevailed, being judged not to have infringed any valid patents. Just to rub it in, Coleco later released a direct clone of the Atari 2600, the Coleco Gemini. There's nothing quite like flicking the V's at your commercial adversaries after a particularly acrimonious court case…

Coleco was celebrating again with news that the Coleco Adam computer, a complete set-up comprising an 80K system, disk drives, printer, keyboard and software for around £400, had sold out even before production had started. With advance orders of 500,000 the Adam looks to be a massive success even before release. Production was to begin in the USA in August with a debut in the UK pencilled in for around October.

The magazine review sections were quieter than usual with the usual software summer lull kicking in. What was noticeable was that the older systems, such as the ZX81, were still getting a steady flow of new software, with the less popular systems getting a look-in too…

Over at Computer & Video Games magazine, the reviewers cast an unassuming eye over several games including *JetPac* (Spectrum, Ultimate), *Mined Out* (Dragon 32, Quicksilva), *Blade Of Blackpoole* (Atari 800, Calisto), *City Defence* (Dragon 32, Shard Software) and the wonderful *Parsec* (TI99/4a, Texas Instruments). Alert! Alien craft advancing…

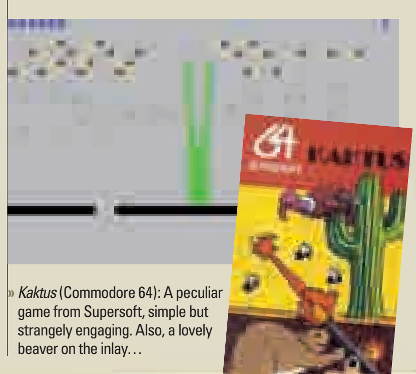
Sinclair User, in contrast, had a rather bland selection of reviews featuring games such as *Monte Carlo* (Spectrum, Micromega), *Knight's Quest* (Spectrum, Phipps Associates) and *Tempest* (Mikro-Gen, ZX81).

Home Computing Weekly covered slightly more stimulating games in the form of *Pssst* (Spectrum, Ultimate), *Robon* (Spectrum, Softek), *Pakacuda* (Rabbit Software, Vic-20), *Cosmic Firebirds* (Solar Software, Vic-20), *Zombies & Potholes* (Jupiter Ace, Jupiter Cantab), *Invaders* (Oric-1, Arcadia) and *Frog Run* (C64, Anirog).

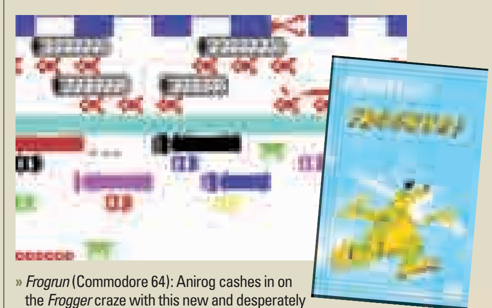
Popular Computing Weekly impressively weighed in with write-ups for new releases covering almost every conceivable machine available, with 13 different systems getting software coverage.

Amongst the gaming diversity on offer was *Violent Universe* (Spectrum, Quest Microsoftware), *Monster Mine* (Lynx 48K, Gem Software), *Doomed* (Sharp MZ80, Solo Software), *Forensic* (BBC, Worm Software), *Franklin's Tomb* (Dragon 32, Salamander), *Kaktus* (C64, Supersoft), *Oric Trek* (Oric-1, Salamander), *Fruitee Nudge* (Colour Genie, NCG), *Zen* (Newbrain, Kuma Computers), *Star Trek* (Jupiter Ace, Ravensoft), *Escape From Perilous* (Atari 400/800, English Software), *Moonlander* (ZX81, Orion) and *Invaders From Outer Space* (Vic-20, Swift Software).

If only someone had released a game for the green-screened retina-scorcher that was the Research Machines 380Z…



» *Kaktus* (Commodore 64): A peculiar game from Supersoft, simple but strangely engaging. Also, a lovely beaver on the inlay…



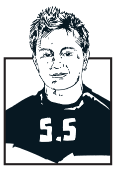
» *Frogrun* (Commodore 64): Anirog cashes in on the *Frogger* craze with this new and desperately unimpressive conversion for the C64.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

ADVENTURE? EXCITEMENT? A JEDI CRAVES NOT THESE THINGS.



- **PUBLISHER:** PARKER BROTHERS
- **RELEASED:** 1982
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI 2600
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



HISTORY

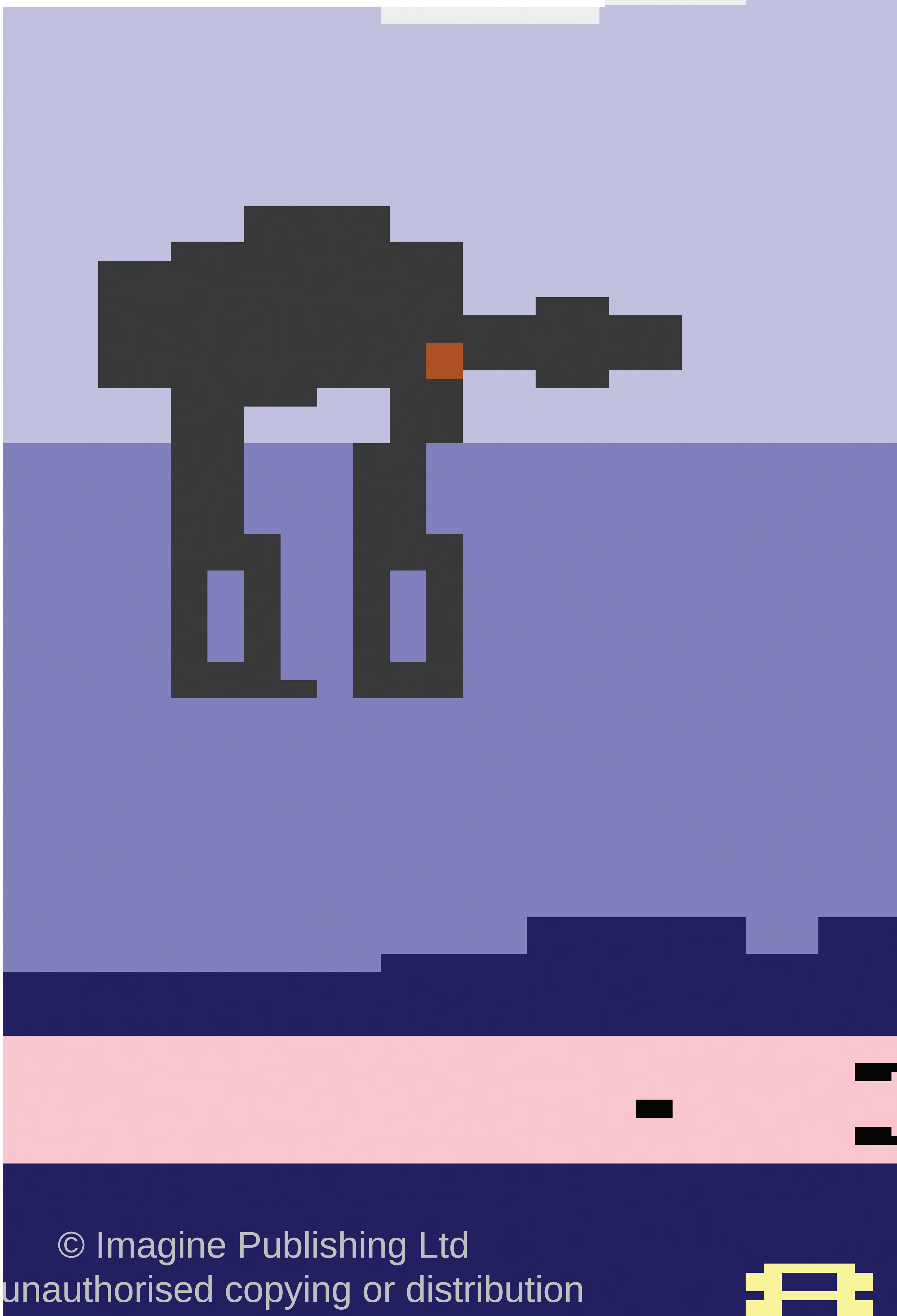
Significant not only as the first ever *Star Wars* themed videogame, but also the first ever movie licence tie-(fighter)-in, this Parker Brothers superb 1982 title was certainly more of a critical success than a commercial one. Still, the small re-enactment of the Imperial invasion of Hoth quickly garnered a strong following of *Defender* migrants looking for a more dynamic strain of the increasingly popular shmup to play on their beloved Atari 2600s.

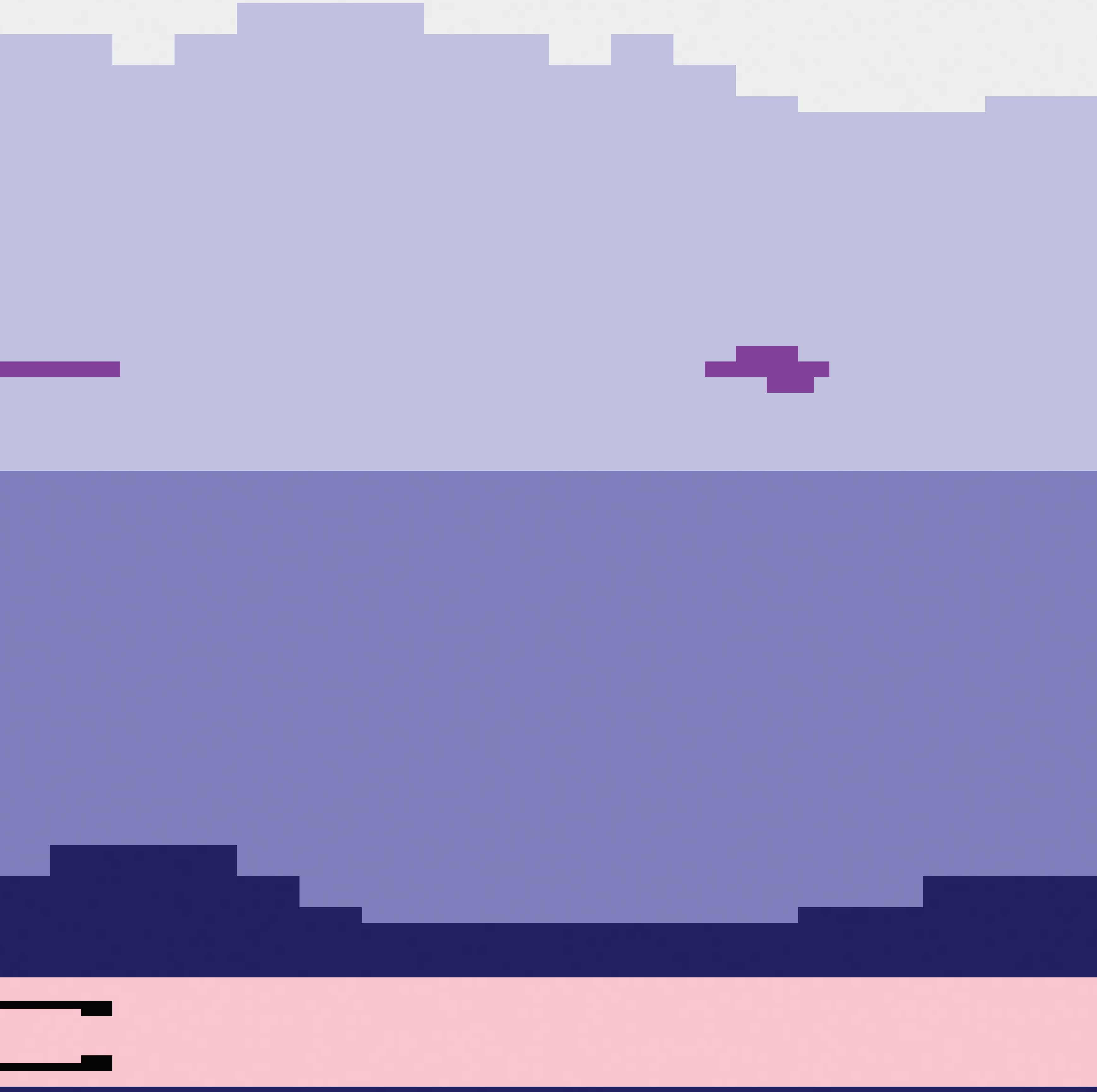
Taking to the cockpit of Luke's Snowspeeder, it's the player's job to circle the ice deserts outside the Rebel base and attempt to repel the ominous, lumbering AT-ATs that are attempting to reach the power generator and thwart the pitiful band of rebels before the Ewoks get to jump in and take down the galactic Empire with sticks and stones.

Not an easy game, it takes no less than 48 hits to bring down a single AT-AT, while the feeble Snowspeeder can sustain just two direct shots from the four-legged Imperial juggernauts. Landing the fragile craft for a brief period gives the stalwart pilot and his gunner the opportunity to enact a few on-the-spot repairs. Keeping a keen eye out for the behemoth's weak spot at the creaking neck-hinge can present the opportunity to bring them to their knees a little more efficiently (this red spot may be supposed to represent the bomb hatch, I can't be sure).

Avoiding damage for an indeterminate amount of time (suffice to say it's too long to easily achieve) sparks off the invigorating movie theme tune, determining the "Force is with you" and rendering the redoubtable snow craft invincible for a few wonderful moments.

Amazingly, it would seem the Atari 2600's Lego-tastic graphics were made for generating *Star Wars* machinery, as a few simple pink boxes create a perfectly serviceable rendition of a Snowspeeder, while the AT-ATs remained as unmistakable as ever. Good on an emulator, and superb after an invigorating eBay bidding war, the first ever Star Wars game set the bar particularly high for the onslaught of officially licensed mundanery that followed.





THE MAKING OF...

PAPERBOY

When Paperboy rode in to arcades in 1984 he brought with him colourful cartoon visuals, a unique control method and fun gameplay. Darran Jones speaks to creators John Salwitz and Dave Ralston and finds out how they managed to create the ultimate busman's holiday.



It's amazing what effect alcohol can have on you once it's swilling around your innards. Some people get an increased sense of confidence, while others suffer from a lack of judgement that sees them making decisions they'd otherwise normally never consider. In the case of John Salwitz (currently senior development director at Electronic Arts) and Dave Ralston (a designer for Locomotive Games) the aforementioned alcohol consumption allowed them to overcome a stumbling block on one of the most popular games of 1984: Atari's *Paperboy*.

"Back in those days Atari was famous for having Beer Fridays," laughs Dave Ralston who, along with Will Noble, was *Paperboy*'s designer and lead artist. "We had a tapper there on the premises and one particular Friday there had been a party; when John and I came in the next day there was still plenty of beer in the keg. Anyway, we dragged it outside onto this atrium and did some brainstorming."

"I think that was the magic moment when everything clicked," agrees Salwitz, *Paperboy*'s lead programmer. "Dave had these wonderful storyboards that showed a projection of the entire street and we literally populated it that very day. We probably knocked out around 60-70 percent of where all the characters in the game would finally end up."

"We were probably stupid for never doing that sooner," laughs Dave. The laughter continues throughout our 40-minute interview and it soon becomes obvious that the two friends both have a huge amount of respect for each other and the game that they brought kicking and screaming into the arcades after a 24-month gestation period. But where did the original concept first come from?

"There had been a game that had just come out in the arcades called *Zaxxon* which had this really cool isometric perspective and it felt really fresh," recalls Ralston. "We saw it and realised that the isometric perspective would offer a very good view of the action in our game and that it would work far better than a side scroller or a top-down. As for the game itself it grew out of the fact that there were five boys in my family and I was the last one and we were all paperboys, so I just took it from there. I think I was a really good paperboy. In fact, I seem to remember that I was a great paperboy," he continues. "The one thing I can remember about those days is driving around as a family and seeing newspapers on roofs and in bushes and stuff. Not everyone was a good paperboy in real life and I think that was at the heart of the idea. I just thought it would be an interesting twist for a game."

Interesting *Paperboy* most certainly was. Most games of the time saw you shooting down wave upon wave of vicious aliens, negotiating mazes or jumping across simplistic platforms; they certainly didn't allow you to participate in your part-time job.

Set over seven days, your task was to deliver papers to subscribers, while causing as much damage as possible to the homes of non-subscribers. Papers could be replenished en route and once you'd completed your daily round you could take part in a short but exhilarating obstacle course. It may have sounded simplistic, but with each street being littered with obstacles it took real skill to negotiate them, especially if you tackled 'Hard Way', *Paperboy*'s final street.

Paperboy may have been exciting and fresh back in the early Eighties, but those beautiful visuals, state-of-the-art controller and slick gameplay did come at a price: the aforementioned 24-month time period…

"It took two years mainly due to some of the changes we had to make along the way," explains Ralston. "It was pretty



» As the week progressed, the obstacles got harder and harder to negotiate.



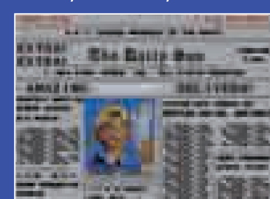


» While you scored points for breaking the windows of non-subscribers, care had to be taken not to hit any others.

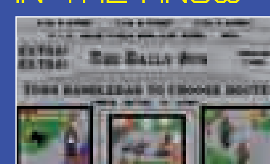
JUST A BIT OF FUN

Don Traeger may have been instrumental to *Paperboy*'s final success, but that didn't mean that Ralston and the rest of the team liked to make things easy for him (all in the name of a good joke, you understand). "I remember that we made this bogus earnings report for him," recalls Ralston, which instantly jogs Salwitz's memory and sends him into guffaws of merriment.

"It was our first field test when you'd put the game out in an arcade, and I think Don must have gone on vacation right after it happened. Anyway, he went away for a whole week and while he was absent we got somebody in marketing (probably Jackie Sherman) to type up an earnings report so that it looked like all the others, except of course, the earnings were horrible. It just showed that the game had absolutely tanked and then I just wrote across the front of it 'Project Cancelled'. We just left it on Don's desk and waited for him to come back from vacation. It was far from the truth as it actually tested very well."



IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPERS:** JOHN SALWITZ
  DAVE RALSTON
- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **GENRE:** ACTION
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £350+ (ORIGINAL CAB)



THE MAKING OF… PAPERBOY



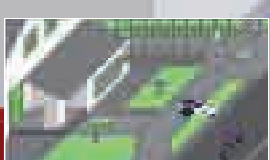
much everything really, from changes in the schematic style, to alterations to the actual controller. It certainly took us a while to figure all those things out."

Fortunately, it wasn't all bad news, as one of the main differences – and for the two men, the most satisfying – was the change in hardware, which gave Salwitz, in particular, far more freedom than when the project had first started. "Originally *Paperboy* started off life as a low-resolution game (about 320 x 240 pixels) before Doug Snyder created the new medium-resolution System II board for it," begins Salwitz. Which explains why it looks very different to earlier games of the same period. "The hardware changed substantially and schematically, it basically went through a radical shift."

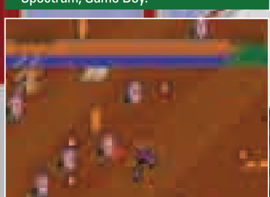
As well as having to deal with the change in hardware, the cost of the machines meant that the game had to be created as efficiently as possible, which in turn added to *Paperboy*'s development time. "That game is literally made up of little 8x8 blocks," continues Salwitz. "The backgrounds were painstakingly created one by one; it's a lot like building with bricks, except the bricks have already been painted. The animations and characters were built using some pretty primitive tools, and so due to the cost of putting all that together, we couldn't really do a lot of extra things and we were very deliberate when putting it all together."

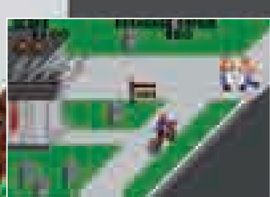
Paperboy's conception may have been long and arduous, but one thing that did make a difference was the sheer amount of playtesting that the game went through. Over the course of its two-year development time, *Paperboy* went through numerous focus groups





» Due to its arcade success, *Paperboy* appeared on a variety of home formats, so we've gathered a small selection here. (Above) C64, (Below left to right) Amiga, Atari Lynx, Master System, Spectrum, Game Boy.



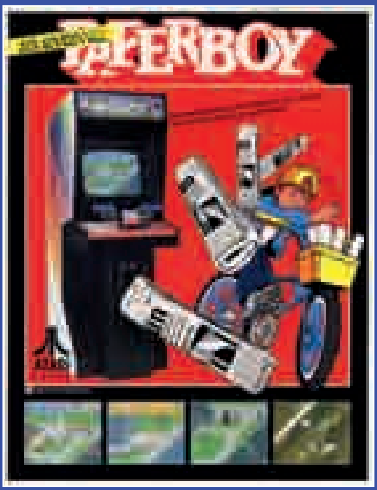








"WE DID HAVE A JOYSTICK ORIGINALLY, BUT WHEN WE FOCUSED THE GAME WITH [IT] IN PLACE, IT JUST DIDN'T GO DOWN WELL AT ALL… WE WANTED TO TRY SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE UNIQUE" DAVE RALSTON



» The original arcade flyer. Note the machine shot showing those famous handlebars.



and playtests before it was eventually released to a more than satisfied public.

When Atari had a new game in development it would simply take a prototype down to a local arcade, leave it in there for the day and judge its success on the amount of quarters that rolled in. It was a concept that wasn't lost on Salwitz and it also allowed one of the other key players in *Paperboy* to come to the foreground: marketing rep Don Traeger.

"Atari's playtesting process was the most beautiful test there was; it really doesn't get any better," gushes Salwitz. "We did a lot of focus group testing as well and that was where Don Traeger really started to get involved. In fact, Don is a very big part of the reason why *Paperboy* ever got finished, because he was not only the original marketing partner on it, but he also came in at a point in the game where we were really struggling.

"We'd just had this really horrific focus group, and it was just heartbreaking and frustrating for the team because we really cared about the product we had created. So anyway, he came in, ran that focus group, came out and everyone – I mean everyone – was saying horrible things about the game. Afterwards he comes out with this really big smile and says, 'That was great, we learned a lot from that.' After that he proceeded to help us really understand what was going on."

Traeger played another important role in *Paperboy*: that of the actual Paperboy himself. Asking about the origins of *Paperboy*'s speech brought many a laugh from Ralston until he admitted that the main character's voice belonged to none other than Traeger, who's now CEO of Locomotive Games. But how does being the voice of a videogame character stack up to being a CEO? "To this day he takes a lot of pride in the fact that he was the voice of the Paperboy and people still remember him for that," laughs Ralston. "It was no actor we used; it was just the marketing guy."

While Traeger started taking control of *Paperboy*'s focus groups, Ralston and Salwitz quickly found out that one of the easiest ways of getting feedback for the game was to simply carry on working on it. "One of the other key ways that you did testing at Atari was that if anyone was going to walk over to your lab or cubicle you would just let them play the game, which is amazingly dissimilar to the way things happen these days," says Salwitz. "There was just so much casual play from other people in the building that I think it was one of the best ways that you could ever understand what really did and didn't work. You could tell when your game was good because people were coming over at lunch and plenty of other times and were literally interrupting your work just so they could have one more go. We'd just sit there and watch them play."

While plenty of playtesting ensured that *Paperboy* was a hit with its target audience once it was eventually released, there were still plenty of other problems that the team needed to solve. While the most recognisable aspect of the arcade machine is the shining chrome handlebars that adorn the front of it, they weren't in place at the beginning of *Paperboy*'s conception.

"We did have a joystick originally," begins Ralston, "but when we focused the game with the joystick in place, it just didn't go down well at all.

"I think the joystick was confusing at the time because of the perspective that we were using," he continues. "We had always had something at the back of our minds that we wanted to try something a little more unique and the joystick feedback that we received kind of confirmed that." Leaving the joystick idea behind, Salwitz and Ralston left the unique control mechanism – "it was basically a *Star Wars* flight controller that was just modified for *Paperboy*" – in the more than capable hands of Milt Loper.

"Atari at that time had a very active mechanical shop," begins Salwitz, when we ask him about the creation of those iconic handlebars. "It was amazing; those guys could pretty much build anything and it was part of Dave's philosophy that we should always try and innovate in all things. In the end we decided that the controls were just another area that we had a chance to innovate in. You also have to keep in mind that back in the early Eighties, we didn't know for sure



» Get hit by a car and you certainly knew about it.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

720°
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1986

KLAX
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1989

RAMPART
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1990



CONVERSION CAPERS

With the arcade game proving to be so popular, *Paperboy* quickly started appearing on various home consoles and computers. Indeed, it was recently released on the 360's Xbox Live Arcade, but neither Ralston nor Salwitz have had a chance to play it yet.

"I remember the NES version, for me at least, being a huge surprise," recalls Salwitz. "Right after we did *Paperboy*, we dove into *720°* and right after that it was *Cyberball* and right after that it was *Rampart* – we were just so focused on our own work. We never thought about how we could continue marketing a product, we were all about what can we do next, and it always had to be completely different. If I'm truthful we were coin-op purists and for us, coin-op hardware was so much more powerful than anything that was in the home. So I think the real truth is that we probably looked down our noses at anything that wasn't coin-op at the time, purely because of the difference in hardware and what you could do with it. At the time I don't think we understood the potential of home sales – this was Atari after all – and we had just got through the VCS nightmares and so we didn't really have an appreciation of what Nintendo was doing at the time at all until it really took off."





that even the joystick would become a foundation for control, or the trackball for that matter. We just saw them as kind of stepping stones to other controls. In the end it turned out that the handlebars themselves made for the most natural way of playing *Paperboy.* We never tried to create them as a way of simply increasing sales; it has always been about what was best for the actual game."

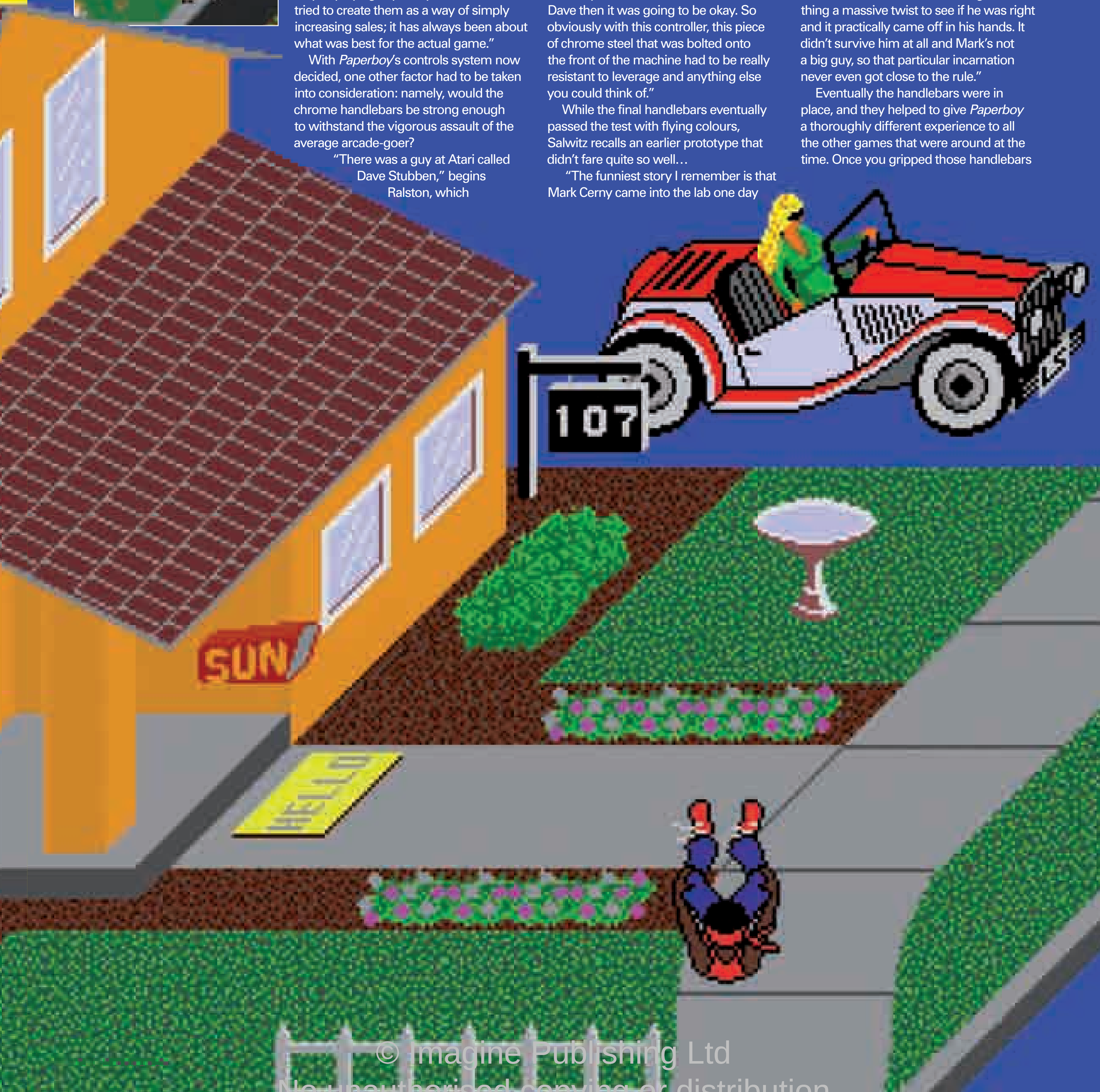
With *Paperboy*'s controls system now decided, one other factor had to be taken into consideration: namely, would the chrome handlebars be strong enough to withstand the vigorous assault of the average arcade-goer?

"There was a guy at Atari called Dave Stubben," begins Ralston, which immediately causes Salwitz to burst into fits of laughter. "He was one of the senior execs at Atari games, and he was a very big, very strong guy. And in all the controls that we used there was always this thing called the 'Stubben rule'. Basically, if the controller could survive Dave then it was going to be okay. So obviously with this controller, this piece of chrome steel that was bolted onto the front of the machine had to be really resistant to leverage and anything else you could think of."

While the final handlebars eventually passed the test with flying colours, Salwitz recalls an earlier prototype that didn't fare quite so well…

"The funniest story I remember is that Mark Cerny came into the lab one day and we had just gotten this brand-new controller in that we were very excited about it. So anyway, I looked at Mark and told him, 'You just watch, it's going to survive and everything.' He basically looked me straight in the eye and said, 'No it won't.' He then decided to give the thing a massive twist to see if he was right and it practically came off in his hands. It didn't survive him at all and Mark's not a big guy, so that particular incarnation never even got close to the rule."

Eventually the handlebars were in place, and they helped to give *Paperboy* a thoroughly different experience to all the other games that were around at the time. Once you gripped those handlebars



in both hands, you were ready to set off on your delivery route through suburban America. With its brightly coloured houses, traditional mail boxes and copious amounts of speech, you could almost imagine that you were actually riding down a sidewalk and delivering papers. To further add to the realism, Salwitz and Ralston ensured that the majority of obstacles you encountered also added to the authenticity. Therefore, dangerous dogs would chase you up the street, huge cars and motorcycles would zip across each road's junctions, and there were even remote controlled cars and self-aware lawn mowers to avoid. While the hazards would get stranger the further you progressed, they were nothing like the obstacles that Salwitz and Ralston had originally intended to use…

"Initially, we wanted *Paperboy* to have a really surreal feel to it," explains Salwitz. "We went pretty crazy for a while and the focus groups that saw it just didn't get it," remembers Ralston. "We had things like speedboats going down the middle of the street, runaway pianos, giant snails at the various junctions and even ducks in business suits that would walk up and down the sidewalk. Just really bizarre stuff like that," he chuckles. "The actual perspective was the same, the look of the art style was the same, and it was just all these wacky characters that weren't received very well.

"For some reason when people rode down the street they just didn't expect to see them," continues Salwitz. "Which is strange," interjects Ralston who, like Salwitz, is once again fighting back laughter. "I see these things all the time."

Ralston may well be used to seeing the grim reaper and unicycle-riding punks whenever he goes for a Sunday drive, but one thing that is noticeably absent from *Paperboy* is the ability to play as a girl. As Salwitz explains, the absence of a female delivery girl was down to memory restrictions and not for any other reason.

"Physically, our ability to put more than one character into that hardware would have been very expensive at the time," he tells us. "The system constraints just stopped you from doing a lot of things and you were literally counting every byte you were putting into things. The central character of the game used an enormous amount of memory, particularly graphics memory (EEPROM) so the storage of that would have been very prohibitive. So we were really stuck with a single character no matter what we did. As for the choice between whether it should have been a paperboy or a papergirl, you just kind of go with the thing that's the most obvious, except of course for the giant snails and all those other things… I'm sure we talked about it at the time, but there would have been no practical way for us to get more than one character in the original game."

With the thought of what didn't make it into the game still fresh in their minds, we are keen to ask the pair what other aspects of *Paperboy* ended up on the cutting room floor.

"Well, I remember just how much trouble we went to in trying to give the Paperboy a throwing animation," muses Ralston. "In the end though it was proving to be such a nightmare we just decided that he shoots them out of his head." Other missing features included proper physics and motion that would see newspapers bounce off walls or get caught in hedges; a larger obstacle course, which at one stage was even going to be the basis for a sequel; and the ability to ride down the other side of the street. "I particularly liked this one," admits Ralston, "and we talked about how we would implement it for ages. We initially talked about going down the other side of the street and having it go in the reverse direction and bringing more traffic into play, but then we would have had the safety commission coming down on us even more."

Despite numerous playtests, stressful focus groups and snapped handlebars, *Paperboy* was a huge success for Atari and remains a beloved classic to many gamers. With the benefit of 23 years of hindsight we are eager to know what changes Salwitz and Ralston would have made to the game if they'd had the time and opportunity.

"One thing we did think about at the time was to ship *Paperboy* as a serialised game," reveals Salwitz. "At the time everything in arcades was based on how much replay you would get out of it, so we did once consider shipping out just Easy Street and then releasing the other two roads three to six months later. I think if we'd gone with this serialised release we would have sold more units."

"Man, that's greed, pure greed," laughs Ralston. "If I was to return to *Paperboy* today the only element I can think of expanding would be the whole BMX biking side of the game and maybe working a trick-based scoring system into it. You could have style points for throwing papers while in a jump, or doing a flip or whatever. I think that would have worked really well…"

While Ralston muses about his super-athletic Paperboy, we ask Salwitz why he thinks their creation remains so enjoyable to so many gamers. "We had a wonderful team," he concludes, "and the people involved are still my very dear friends. We had a really good time working together, and to be able to work with four or five people and have each of them focused on a completely different part of the game and still be able to talk about it afterwards is a really rare and wonderful experience. I feel *Paperboy* was successful because the team was successful."

"OUR ABILITY TO PUT MORE THAN ONE CHARACTER INTO THAT HARDWARE WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY EXPENSIVE AT THE TIME… YOU WERE LITERALLY COUNTING EVERY BYTE" JOHN SALWITZ

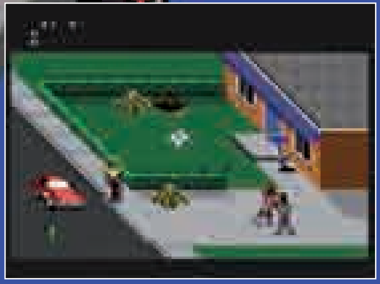


» At the beginning of each day you'd be immediately told how many subscribers you had left.



» As a reward after finishing your paper round, you got to ride along an obstacle course.





» Mindscape's sequel was so bad, this is the only mention we're going to give it. The N64 version wasn't much better.



» Successfully finishing the obstacle course saw you being treated with a pleasant congratulations screen.

23 YEARS ON

Amazingly, Atari's *Paperboy* is still wowing gamers, and it's on Microsoft's 360 of all things. Converted by Digital Eclipse, the Xbox Live version of *Paperboy* features online leader boards, a variety of achievements (some of which are incredibly hard to earn) and an assortment of online two-player games. Sadly, while the game is as enjoyable as ever – although if we're brutally honest, the 360's D-pad isn't a match for the arcade machine's handlebars – taking the title online wasn't perhaps the smartest move that Digital Eclipse has ever made, mainly because it's just so damned laggy.

Still, it's certainly not bad for 400 points (around £3.50) and while an updated look would have been nice it certainly beats being a paperboy for real.







Year released: 1987

Original price: £599

Buy it now for: £20

Associated magazines: Amiga World, Amiga Format, CU Amiga, Amiga Power, Amiga Action, Amiga Computing, Amiga Force, Amiga Mania, The One

Why the Amiga 500 was great… Why *wasn't* the Amiga great? During its early years, the A500 was the most desirable games machine on the planet thanks to several games that just wouldn't have been possible anywhere other than the arcades. As the years passed, its graphics became less relevant but the ease of development meant that there were hundreds of programmers pumping out classic after classic on a seemingly weekly basis.



RETROINSPECTION

AMIGA 500

FEW WORDS GET THE NOSTALGIA GLANDS FLOWING LIKE 'AMIGA' AND '500'. TO HEAR IT IS TO BE TRANSPORTED BACK TO A TIME WHEN NEW 2D VISUALS STILL HAD THE ABILITY TO SHOCK AND WHEN UK DEVELOPERS PRODUCED THE BEST COMPUTER GAMES IN THE ENTIRE WORLD. BUT HOW DID THE MUCH-LOVED HOME COMPUTER COME TO BE? ASHLEY DAY REVEALS ALL…



For a home computer that's so inextricably associated with the history and fate of Commodore, it's perhaps a little surprising that the Amiga's genesis can be tracked all the way back to Commodore's biggest rival: Atari. Jay Miner, a talented designer of integrated circuits had joined Atari during the boom period of the late Seventies and was responsible for designing the display hardware in the Atari 2600. With this achievement alone, Miner's place in the videogame history books would be assured, but it was what he planned to create next that would really elevate him into the halls of fame. While at Atari, Miner had envisioned a new type of games machine that would make use of Motorola's powerful 68000 processor. Atari, which was then under the control of Warner Communications, had little interest in the 68000, however, and was much more interested in continuing to exploit the cheaper 6502 processors found in its 8-bit machines.

Disenchanted with the way Atari had been handled in the post-Bushnell organisation, Miner left the company in 1980 and, for a short time, he worked in the medical industry designing pacemakers. Two years later, however, Miner received a phone call that would rocket him back into the computer industry and change the history of gaming forever. On the end of the line was Larry Kaplan, another ex-Atari employee who had left to found Activision. Kaplan was keen to start a new videogame company and was looking for funding. Miner suggested a handful of dentist friends who were happy to invest in new projects and, before he knew it, he found himself working at a new company called Hi-Toro with Kaplan and a group of highly talented ex-Atari engineers.

In order to keep money rolling in, Hi-Toro was split into two divisions. The first would work on peripherals for games consoles like the 2600 and Colecovision whilst a second much more secretive division would experiment with the 68000 processor to create a killer 16-bit games machine. The computer was codenamed Lorraine (after the wife of Hi-Toro's chief executive) and was designed to be as open a development system as possible so that anyone could make a game if they wanted to: the strategy had worked wonders for the hugely successful C64 so it made sense for Hi-Toro to follow suit. It was also decided that, to take strain from the processor and ensure arcade-quality graphics, Lorraine would use custom-designed chips rather than off-the-shelf components. This meant that the computer would be more expensive to produce than its nearest rivals but the end results would be far better.

1983 was something of a turning point for Hi-Toro and Lorraine. While the rest of the Western videogaming world recoiled in horror from the disastrous videogames crash, Hi-Toro cunningly rethought its organisation in order to survive the harsh consumer climate. The peripherals division, now made redundant by the failure of the console market, was abolished whilst Lorraine was redesigned to be as much a computer as it was a games machine. A keyboard, mouse and expansion options were fitted as standard whilst new staff were hired to work on a fully fledged

"THE COMPUTER WOULD BE MORE EXPENSIVE TO PRODUCE THAN ITS NEAREST RIVALS"

Amiga 2600

Although some may know that the Amiga company (aka Hi-Toro) started out developing for the Atari 2600, few have actually played the games, mostly because they were developed for an obscure controller and released in limited quantities. Amiga's Joyboard was an Atari 2600 controller on which the player had to stand and control its games by moving from side to side. Three games were released for the Joyboard: *Mogul Mania*, a skiing game; the unreleased surfing game, *Surf's Up*; and a Simon Says clone called *Off Your Rocker*. Technically finished in 1983, *Off Your Rocker* never actually had an official release as Amiga couldn't afford to pay for the cartridges to be labelled. The labelling company held onto the cartridges and eventually sold them to Pleasant Valley Video, years later, who then sold them on to the 2600 community with homemade labels.



RETROINSPECTION

AMIGA 500







» Left: The Amiga 600 was basically an A500+ in a smaller case. **Above:** The original Amiga 1000 complete with handy keyboard garage.

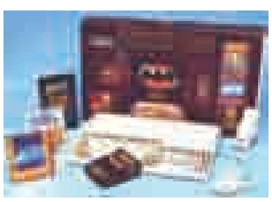
operating system called Intuition. It is also around this time that Hi-Toro was renamed as Amiga. The Toro name had already been in use by a Japanese gardening technologies firm so it was thought that a new name was needed to avoid confusion. Amiga, a Spanish word meaning 'female friend', was picked for its non-threatening nature. Finally, in September 1983, Lorraine's three main custom chips (later known as Agnus, Denise and Paula) were completed but were far too big to be used inside a working home computer – each was the size of a large circuit board.

By 1984, Amiga was ready to show off its top secret project and, on 4 January, Lorraine was unveiled at the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. The machine itself didn't look that impressive – as it was still in the prototype stage and was made up of several circuit 'breadboards' joined together – but it was how the computer looked on-screen that really wowed the CES attendees. RJ Mical, one of the coders behind Intuition, had programmed the now legendary 'Boing Ball' demo. Boing Ball was demonstrated at the CES in an attempt to showcase Lorraine's graphical capabilities and did not disappoint. The red and white chequered ball, now an official logo for the Amiga, would bounce around the screen and alternate the direction of its rotations, all while an Intuition window functioned at 100% speed in the background.

The amazing graphical demo was enough to convince one company that Lorraine was worth investing in and, ironically enough, that company was Jay Miner's old employer, Atari. Interested in the custom chips, rather than the computer itself, Atari offered to buy one million shares in Amiga for $3 each and even loaned the firm $500,000 to keep it afloat while the paperwork was finalised. The deal soon began to turn sour, however. Atari knew that Amiga could not afford to pay off its $500,000 loan and so delayed paperwork on the buyout and, in the meantime, reduced its offer to 98 cents per share. Things were looking grim for Amiga. Atari was gearing up to buy the company at a bargain price and didn't even plan to finish the computer that Miner had dreamed of for the past four years. Just before the Atari deal could be finalised, however, Amiga managed to find another enterprising computer company which was both willing to pay a fair price for Lorraine and help develop it into the machine that Miner and company had intended. That company was, of course, Commodore, which swooped in at the last minute to buy Amiga for $4.24 per share and even gave them $1 million to pay off their debt to Atari.

With that sticky situation behind it and rejuvenated by a $17 million investment from its new owner, Amiga set about finishing the Lorraine project, which was now to be known as the Commodore Amiga. The custom chipset was finally finished and reduced to a manageable size. Named after different people, so that competitors wouldn't realise what they were talking about in public, each of the chips performed a very specific task. Denise was the graphics co-processor and Paula controlled the sounds and external ports while Gary handled miscellaneous operations. Agnus, meanwhile, was the most important of the chips. Its main function was to regulate access to the on-board RAM but it also included two co-processors, known as Copper and Blitter, which allowed the Amiga to display the astounding graphics for which it became famous. Copper was designed to handle up to eight different sprites anywhere on screen at a single time whilst Blitter was responsible for moving bitmap images around in memory much faster than the

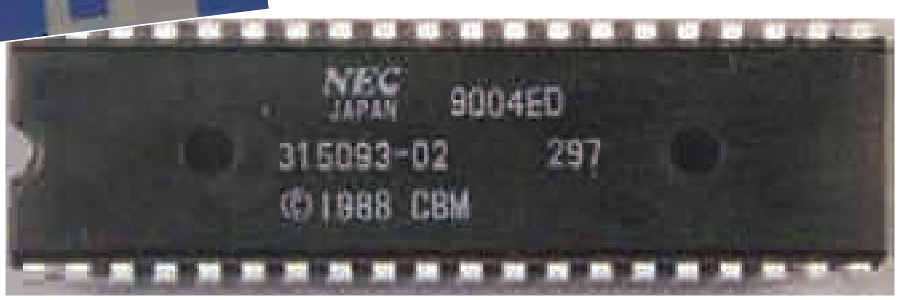
"THE MACHINE ITSELF DIDN'T LOOK THAT IMPRESSIVE, BUT IT WAS HOW THE COMPUTER LOOKED ON-SCREEN THAT REALLY WOWED THE CES ATTENDEES"

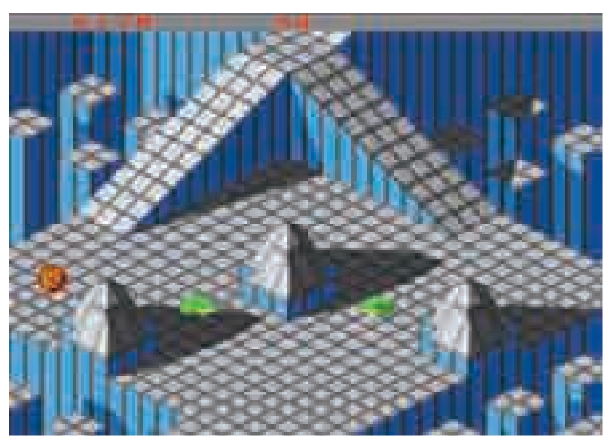


» An original promo shot for the hugely succsfull 'Bat Pack'.

» Below: The original Kickstart came on floppy disk but by the time of the A500 it was a ROM chip on the Amiga motherboard.







» *Marble Madness* was one of the first coin-op conversions on the Amiga and was virtually arcade perfect.

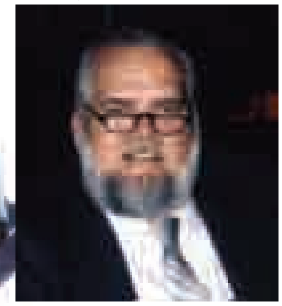




» An advert for the ill-conceived CDTV.



» The CDTV, complete with peripherals to turn it into a fully functioning A500.



» Jay Miner (1932 - 1994), the father of the Amiga.



» The Cartoon Classics Amiga 500 bundle included the brilliant *Lemmings*.

CPU would have been able to on its own. On the software side, the Amiga also saw major advancements during its final months of design. Intuition was renamed Amiga DOS (later shortened to Amiga OS) and was separated into two entities. Kickstart took care of the Amiga's basic needs, giving it just enough instructions to launch whatever program you fed into the floppy drive. Workbench, meanwhile, was the Amiga's Graphical User Interface. It was the Windows of its day and one of the first to offer a true multitasking environment, years before the PC.

On 23 July 1985, the Amiga 1000 made its first official public appearance at the Lincoln Centre in New York. In typical Commodore fashion, the latest fashionable celebrities, in this case Andy Warhol and Debbie Harry, were roped in to promote the computer. The pair were enlisted to demonstrate the Amiga's graphical capabilities in the program *Graphic Craft*, whilst *Music Craft* was shown off with a full synthesised score, written by the program's authors. The lavish launch ceremony worked and when the Amiga 1000 launched in September 1985 it was an instant hit with those who could afford it. But at $1,295, the A1000 was twice the price of its nearest competitor, the Atari ST, and way out of the price range of the casual user. Those only interested in playing games weren't quite willing to pay up for an A1000 either, as aside from the stunning-looking *Defender Of The Crown* and the Commodore-published *Mind Walker*, the best games on the computer were all ports of existing Atari ST titles. Something would have to change if Commodore wanted the Amiga to dominate the home computer market in the same way as the C64 had.

In 1987 Commodore answered the prayers of those gamers with the launch of the Amiga 500. Essentially a cut-down version of the A1000, the 500 crammed a motherboard, several expansion ports and a disk drive into a slim keyboard casing. It was also compatible with household televisions and featured an upgraded version of Amiga DOS. The loss of a monitor and compact design also meant that the A500 was much cheaper to produce than the Amiga 1000 and could, crucially, be priced low enough to realistically compete with the Atari ST.

June 1987 saw the UK launch of the A500 at £599, which may seem expensive in an age where people cry and moan at the £425 PlayStation 3 but was actually very reasonable for a computer of the day and saw the 500 become a much more affordable system for computer gamers of the late Eighties. *Defender Of The Crown* made its UK debut alongside the 500 and had the same effect on gamers as it had the year before in the States. The detailed graphics, the number of colours on screen, the incredible musical score and the first-person-perspective jousting were like nothing anyone had ever seen on a computer or console before and as soon as those gamers saw it running they just had to have an Amiga. 1987 was also the year that many European developers began thinking about shifting development from C64 and Spectrum to the Amiga. The affordable A500 and open architecture of the computer made it the next logical step for Europe's smaller development houses and bedroom programmers. Great UK codeshops like Psygnosis, The Bitmap Brothers, Bullfrog and Sensible Software all began working on the Amiga around 1987/88 and slowly but surely the A500 began to build up a catalogue of games that made it one of the most desirable machines available. This was great for Commodore, of course, and even better for UK gamers but did, unfortunately, cause a bit of a headache for American Amiga fans. With most of the



» *Code Name Hell Squad* was the last commercial game to be released for the A500.

Links

One of the greatest things about old Amiga software is that it can be acquired for free on the internet, or bought for less than a pound per game at auction. For further information on the Amiga's vast number of releases, Retro Gamer recommends www.lemonamiga.com and hol.abime.net – both excellent databases of Amiga games. www.aminet.net should help those looking for shareware games and utilities and is also well worth visiting for its historical importance, as the website has been around since 1992 and was once an essential archive for web-surfing Amiga owners. Finally, fans of Team 17 may like to visit www.dream17.co.uk – the only place where Team 17's Amiga back catalogue can be legally downloaded for free.



"A CUT-DOWN VERSION OF THE AMIGA 1000, THE 500 CRAMMED A MOTHERBOARD, SEVERAL EXPANSION PORTS AND A DISK DRIVE INTO A SLIM KEYBOARD CASING"

AMIGA 500

"COMMODORE HAD CREATED ONE OF THE WORLD'S FIRST MULTIMEDIA SET-TOP BOXES BUT IT SEEMED THAT NOBODY, INCLUDING COMMODORE, WAS READY FOR SUCH NEW TECHNOLOGY"

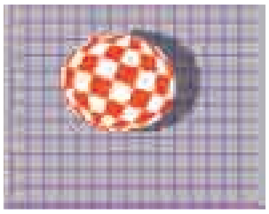
Back From the Dead

On 22 April 2007, Amiga Inc announced the development of the first mass-produced Amiga range in 13 years. Using Power PC technology, Amiga Inc, in association with ACK Software, plans to produce two new Amiga machines. One will be a compact, low-power computer, priced at $500 and the other will be a pro-user computer at $1,500. "ACK and Amiga have spent many months working on designs and working with various manufacturers to create great products with a competitive price point. We will be working with the Amiga retailers over the coming weeks to solidify launch and support plans", said Bill McEwen of Amiga Inc. For more information, log on to www.amiga.com





» Most of Commodore's print ads missed the point of why the Amiga 500 was so popular.



» The Boing Ball demo as it would have first appeared at the Consumer Electronics Show.

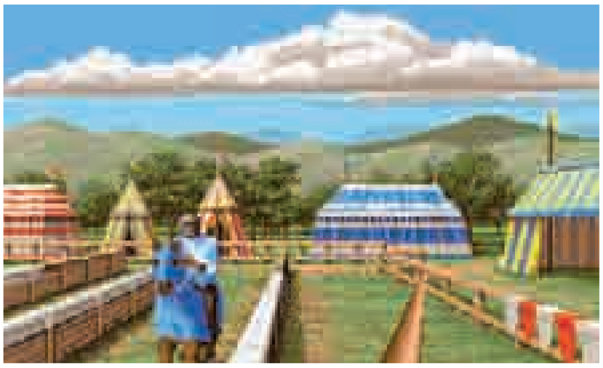


» The Lorraine prototype as it appeared at the Consumer Electronics Show in 1984.

Amiga's greatest games coming out of Europe, US gamers suffered the brunt of PAL/NTSC incompatibility problems and had to resort to fitting switches into their precious computers and even buying expensive multiformat monitors.

The UK's favourable relationship with the Amiga didn't end with the software developers as Commodore UK also seemed to have a better idea of how to promote the computer than their International counterpart. Seeing that the Amiga 500, like the C64 before it, was destined for success as a games machine rather than a business machine, Commodore UK began producing packages that bundled the computer with several games at a discount price. While Commodore International had packaged the A500 with business software and digital art packages, David Pleasance at Commodore UK negotiated with Warner Bros to create the Batman Pack, which bundled an A500 along with a copy of the new *Batman* game (based on the Tim Burton film) as well as copies of *The New Zealand Story*, *Interceptor* and EA's incredible *Deluxe Paint 2* for just £399. In the run-up to Christmas 1989 the 'Bat Pack', as Amiga fans affectionately named it, helped raise the number of UK Amiga owners to over 2 million – a success that saw Pleasance promoted to managing director of Commodore UK.

The next few years saw several other games bundles released but it was the Bat Pack that really sealed the success of the Amiga 500 and helped sell enough machines to ensure that the Atari ST became a distant memory. But for every success that Commodore UK achieved, it seemed as though Commodore International was close behind with a disastrous plan, destined to sink the Amiga to the bottom of the sea. One of the first of these suicidal business decisions was the infamous CDTV. By stripping the keyboard



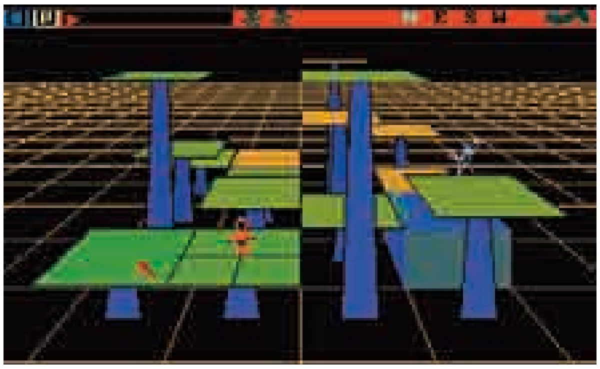
» For many early Amiga owners, the stunning *Defender Of The Crown* justified the purchase of the computer alone.



» *Shadow Of The Beast* was a UK-developed game that looked far better than anything the Americans had made.

and disk drive from the Amiga 500, adding a CD-ROM drive and packaging it in a sleek VCR style casing, Commodore had created one of the world's first multimedia set-top boxes but it seemed that nobody, including Commodore, was ready for such new technology. Priced at £699, the CDTV was £300 more than the average Amiga 500 and compatible with far fewer games, whilst software manufacturers seemed to have little idea of how to take advantage of the CD-ROM medium. Needless to say, the CDTV was a huge flop and was discontinued a year later. The whole project was a huge financial loss and public embarrassment for Commodore and would not be their last needless folly.

For the time being, however, the traditional Amiga 500 continued to go from strength to strength with 1991 proving to be something of a golden year for the computer. Despite competition from the Super Nintendo and Mega Drive and a slight drop in A500 hardware sales, existing owners were rewarded with some of the greatest games in the history of the Amiga. Commodore UK launched the Amiga 500 Plus, which was virtually identical to the existing 500 but came with a full 1MB of RAM as standard. A whole new wave of quality games followed. *Another World*, *Full Contact*, *SWIV*, *Cruise For A Corpse*, *Lemmings*, *Moonstone*, *Leander*, *Alien Breed*, *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Mega Lo Mania*, *Exile*… the list of defining Amiga titles to appear in 1991 goes



» Created by the late Bill Williams, *Mind Walker* is believed to be the first Amiga game ever made and was published by Commodore itself.



» *Metal Warrior*, one of the more recent home-brew games on the A500.



on and on. Some of these games even found themselves packaged into the Amiga's second most popular hardware bundle. Cartoon Classics cost £359 and included *Lemmings*, *The Simpsons*, *Captain Planet* and *Deluxe Paint 3*. Many of these games and others that followed in the coming months made use of the ECS chipset in the A500 Plus, which created another problem for American Amigans who never received an official release of the hardware update. Eager to play the European hits, they were forced to hardwire an extra 512KB of Chip RAM into their Amigas and even faced the prospect of having to pull out the Agnus chip and pop in the new Fat Agnus to cope with addressing the full megabyte of RAM.

The 500 Plus was soon discontinued, however, as Commodore made efforts to compete with the console market with the Amiga 600. Another variation on the 500 hardware, the A600 was launched in 1992 and featured a much smaller casing, presumably so that it could more comfortably occupy the space underneath a television set rather than hogging a computer desk. Some models of the A600 even came with internal hard drives, which reduced the need for messy disk swapping. But the 600 was ultimately seen as too little too late and was soon dropped by Commodore as its sales fizzled out.

While Commodore failed to re-ignite hardware sales, however, software sales continued to be very strong for Amiga developers.



» The impact of the Amiga continues to be felt to this day.

Despite a rising threat from piracy, developers still managed to prosper on the Amiga. Team 17, for example, released a record nine Amiga games in 1993 and even shared a Publisher of the Year award with Electronic Arts that year. Public Domain houses also flourished during this period, distributing huge volumes of indie games long before the term 'home-brew' even existed.

The coming years saw Commodore stumble one too many times and eventually implode despite the brilliance of its second-generation Amigas, the 4000, 1200 and CD32, but that didn't stop the Amiga 500 from continuing to be a critical success. Even without an official hardware presence, over 150 Amiga games were released in 1994, another 90 in 1995 and a further 86 between 1996 and 2000. Amongst those releases were even more of the Amiga's all-time greats such as *Worms*, *Theme Park* and *Beneath A Steel Sky*.

The point-and-click adventure *Code Name Hell Squad* was the final commercial game to be compatible with the Amiga 500, although it did require a CD-ROM drive. That new games were being released 13 years after the launch of A500 and six years after the fall of Commodore is testament to the dedication of the Amiga user base and the passion of its software developers. Incidentally, many of those users are still around, still using their Amigas and even producing new software. The last three years have seen a handful of decent shareware releases such as *Metal Warrior* and *Tank Wars*, while advances in the Amiga emulation scene – most notably through the only legal solution, Amiga Forever – should see more new shareware games released for years to come.

Amiga itself is still around too. After being sold from company to company over the last 13 years, Amiga Inc is now mostly a software company, although it is working to produce new hardware. It should be noted, though, that the new Amigas are Power PC -based computers that have little in common with Jay Miner's original vision, other than the promising Amiga OS 4, and will not be compatible with any old Amiga software.

Regardless of the trials and tribulations of the hardware itself, however, the Amiga's greatest legacy is the excellent catalogue of games that were available for it and the huge number of European developers who cut their teeth on the Amiga and now create some of the greatest games of today. Rockstar North, Team 17, Sony Liverpool, Lionhead, Bizarre Creations… many of these developers, and more, might not be around today were it not for the power and accessibility offered by the Amiga 500 in 1987.



» The original Workbench operating system looks garish now but was a technical marvel in 1985.

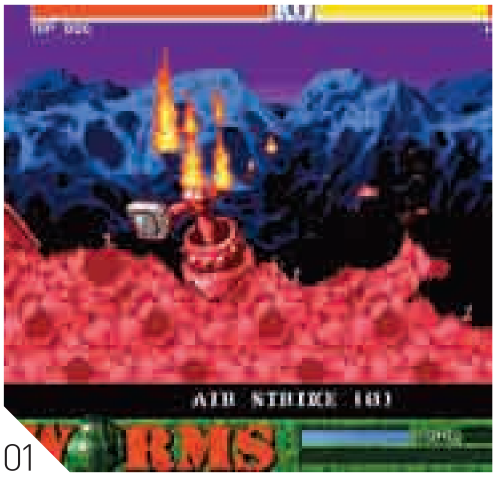


» Two limited-edition A500s produced, in Germany, to commemorate the sale of 1 million Amigas in 1989.

AMIGA 500

PERFECT TEN GAMES

Amiga's Commodore 500 was a huge success, so it should come as no surprise that a variety of superb games are available for it. Indeed, it's practically impossible to name just ten games, as for every one we put forward, three other titles were just as deserving. Still, here's what we finally decided on. to have your own say, head on over to the forums at www.retrogamer.net/forum.



01



02


03



04

WORMS

- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** OCEAN
- » **CREATED BY:** TEAM 17
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BODY BLOWS

01 You'd have thought that by 1995, ten years after the Amiga 1000's launch, it had seen every one of its defining games already. Well, Andy Davidson and Yorkshire-based Team 17 obviously thought there was room for one more and the world agreed with them. *Worms* was an absolute sensation and went on to sell millions of copies across countless formats, sequels and spin-offs. It's important to remember that the multiplayer strategy game began life on the Amiga, however, and was mostly a five year labour of love of just one man and a copy of Blitz Basic. And that was what was really great about the Amiga: it turned bedroom programmers into millionaires and created memorable franchises that endure for a lifetime. Can the same be said of the Xbox? We think not.

JIMMY WHITE'S WHIRLWIND SNOOKER

- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** VIRGIN
- » **CREATED BY:** ARCHER MACLEAN
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DROPZONE

02 It may have been written by Retro Gamer's star columnist, but there's no favouritism here. *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* deserves to be in the Perfect Ten because it was the first game to really make snooker work on a home computer and remains a damn good sports title to this day. The 3D graphics and accurate real-time physics on each of the balls made *Whirlwind Snooker* a landmark game that pushed the hardware further than most gamers thought possible. It's arguable that the game has never been bettered, if not in its gameplay and graphics then definitely in its humour. Who can forget the cheeky faces the balls would pull if yo u didn't take a shot?

ANOTHER WORLD

- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** VIRGIN
- » **CREATED BY:** DELPHINE SOFTWARE
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** FUTURE WARS

03 *Defender Of The Crown* and *Shadow Of The Beast* may be the two games that wowed consumers enough to buy an Amiga but they were both severely lacking in the gameplay department. *Another World*, on the other hand, had both incredible graphics and utterly gripping gameplay to match. Essentially an evolution of the *Prince Of Persia* style of game, *Another World* swapped sword fighting for laser guns and added a bunch of fiendishly tricky action puzzles. The game looked stunning too; the use of vector graphics was a stroke of genius that ensured that *Another World* looked light years ahead of any other game of the time. Such a shame that Eric Chahi hasn't made another game since, although he's said to be working on an idea for a new strategy title.

LEMMINGS

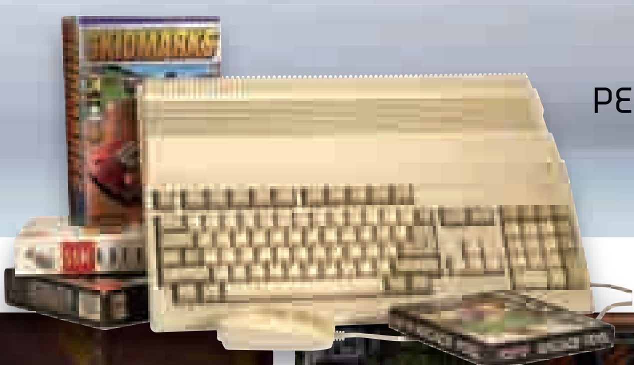
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** PSYGNOSIS
- » **CREATED BY:** DMA DESIGN
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BODY HARVEST

04 What can be said about *Lemmings* that hasn't been said before? It's appeared on nearly every format known to man and is surely as much a household name as *Tetris* and *Space Invaders*. Sequels and updates continue to appear to this day and the little suicidal rodents show no sign of losing their popularity. Back in 1991, however, the release of *Lemmings* was a complete surprise. The concept was totally original and made for an instant hit. Its biggest achievement: the simple presentation and easy-to-use control system meant that anyone could pick up the game and play it. *Lemmings* had the whole family playing games together 15 years before the Nintendo Wii had even launched. Head to page 78 of this very issue for further proof of DMA Design's greatness.

SPEEDBALL 2

- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** IMAGE WORKS
- » **CREATED BY:** BITMAP BROTHERS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** XENON 2

05 The recent news that a next-gen remake of *Speedball 2* is in the works has had the Retro Gamer staff drooling uncontrollably into their coffee cups every morning since the game's announcement. Why, you may ask? Because the original Amiga game was sheer digital perfection, the likes of which had never been seen before, or since. Oozing style from the Bitmaps' trademark metallic visuals to the cries of "Ice Cream!, Ice Cream!", *Speedball 2's* greatest triumph was its imaginative rule set and peerless two-player gameplay. Many Amiga owners must remember whiling away the hours with a friend and probably do so to this day. A finer sports game it is impossible to find, in the past or present. It's so good, in fact, that we wish it was a real sport.





05



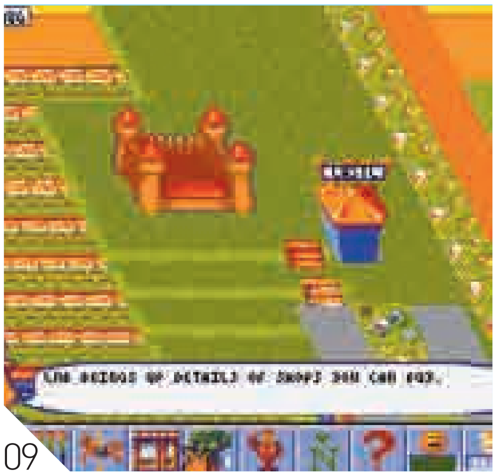
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10

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** US GOLD
» **CREATED BY:** LUCASFILM GAMES
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE

06 **The Amiga's incredible graphical capabilities and standard mouse controller made it a perfect machine for point-and-click adventures and there were plenty of them made over the years.** Picking out a favourite is an incredibly difficult task but as *The Secret Of Monkey Island* will have been the first adventure that many of us actually played on the Amiga, we have to go for that. Using an enhanced version of the SCUMM engine from *Maniac Mansion*, *The Secret of Monkey Island* looked great and featured plenty of brilliant puzzles. But it was the insane humour that really set it apart from the competition. The world would be a much duller place without Insult Sword fighting now wouldn't it?

ALIEN BREED

» **RELEASED:** 1991
» **PUBLISHED BY:** TEAM 17
» **CREATED BY:** TEAM 17
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** QWAK

07 **With only one previous title, the beat-em-up, *Full Contact*, to its name, few expected much from ex-PD codeshop Team 17 with its second title.** That is until *Alien Breed* made its stunning debut and sent jaws hurtling towards the floor, up and down the country. One of the first Amiga games to use a full 1MB of RAM, *Alien Breed* looked incredible back in the day and played even better. Basically a sci-fi version of Gauntlet with a great two-player mode, tons of cool weapons and even sampled speech, *Alien Breed* set Team 17's standard for creating top-quality arcade-style titles on the Amiga. Later sequels were technically better but none quite had the shocking impact of the original. No wonder its Special Edition spent a whopping 33 weeks in the budget charts.

SENSIBLE SOCCER

» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **PUBLISHED BY:** RENEGADE
» **CREATED BY:** SENSIBLE SOFTWARE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CANNON FODDER

08 **Football games have been around for as long as games machines themselves and, over the years, have become much more realistic simulations of the sport as technology has improved.** There's one football game that managed to be extremely playable without being a simulation, however, and that game was the mighty *Sensible Soccer*. With the emphasis placed well and truly on the fun factor, *Sensible Soccer* was, for many gamers, the greatest football game of the Nineties and remains the superior choice to this day (although just as many prefer *Sensible World of Soccer*). There are still hundreds of people out there who kept hold of their Amigas just to play *Sensible Soccer*. Everyone else will have to wait for the imminent Xbox Live Arcade version later this year.

THEME PARK

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
» **CREATED BY:** BULLFROG
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SYNDICATE

09 **Back in the early Nineties, resource management games were defined by one title alone: Will Wright's highly influential Sim City.** A truly brilliant game, *Sim City's* only problem was that constant town planning wasn't actually that much fun. The average sugar-fuelled kid needed something with a little more colour, something with fast-moving vehicles and something where little cartoon people throw up on screen. Those needs were answered by British coding legend Peter Molyneux and his ground breaking Theme Park. Designing stomach-churning rollercoasters was endless fun for the child in all of us, whilst adding extra salt to food in order to improve drinks sales appealed to the unscrupulous capitalist inside. The recent DS remake is well worth a look as well.

WINGS

» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **FREELY RELEASED BY:** CINEMAWARE
» **CREATED BY:** CINEMAWARE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

10 **You couldn't ask for a more varied game than Cinemaware's *Wings*.** Not only did the World War I game feature isometric shooting sections and two-dimensional bombing runs but it also had a tasty three-dimensional dog-fighting mode that was way ahead of its time. It's hard to believe that the game was made in 1990 as the 3D sections looked absolutely incredible and far in advance of anything that had appeared on consoles, PC or even the arcades at the time. Not just a graphical treat, *Wings* also had emotional impact and fully immersed you in its world. In between each level it would show pages of a diary, which told of the main character's eerily realistic wartime experiences, provoking an emotional response in the player that is all too rare in retro and modern gaming alike.





AMIGA 500

and the rest...

Commodore's 16-bit triumph features so many games that we'd need a whole mag just to feature them. Console yourself with the following shots.





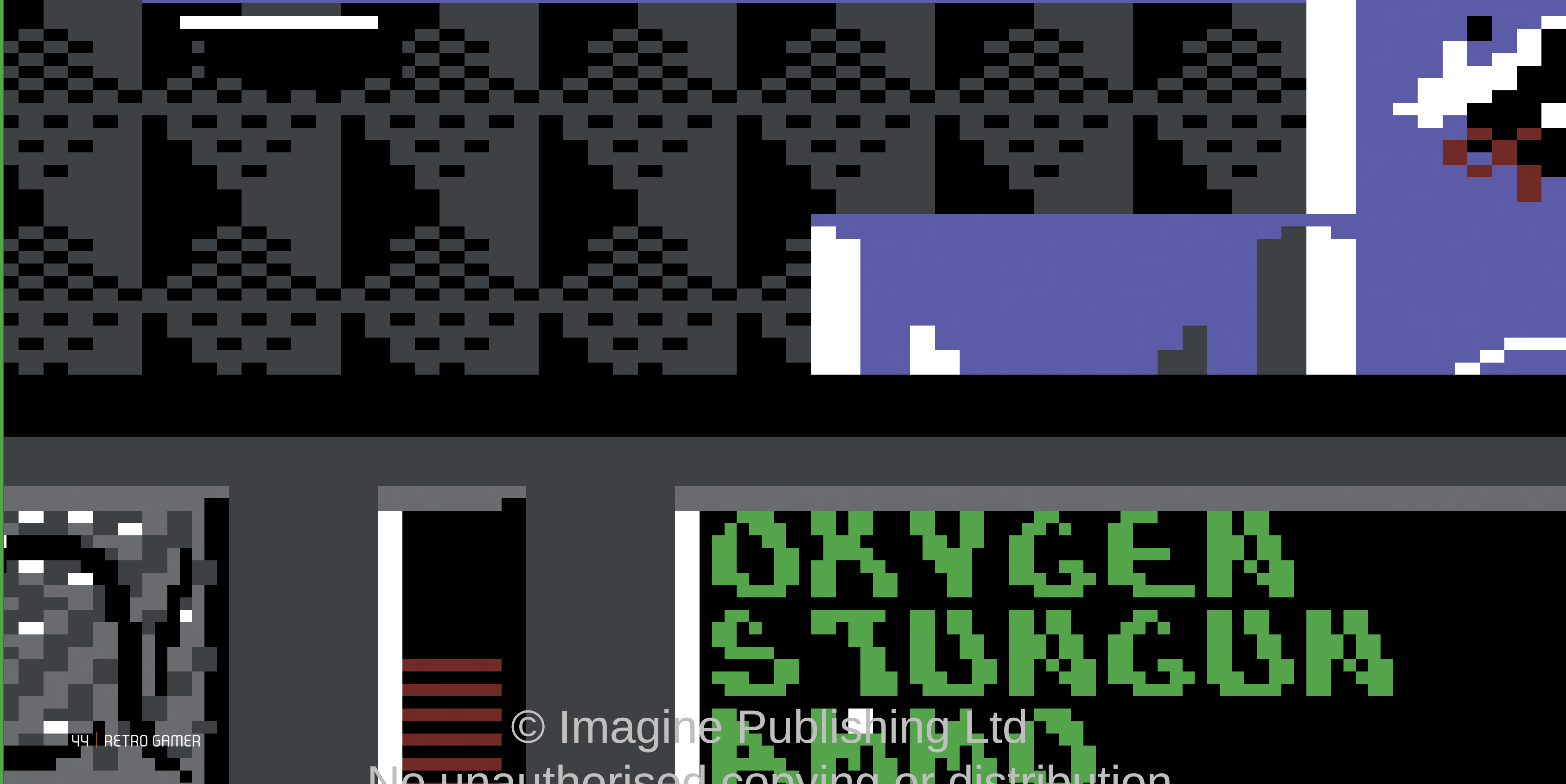
01 DOJO DAN
02 POWERDROME
03 WEIRD DREAMS
04 ALIEN BREED
05 DISPOSABLE HERO
06 MAGIC POCKETS
07 CARRIER COMMAND
08 RAMPART
09 LAST NINJA REMIX
10 SIM CITY
11 WINGS
12 DRAGON'S LAIR
13 MIDWINTER
14 SHADOW OF THE BEAST
15 TOTAL ECLIPSE
16 AGONY
17 GAUNTLET II
18 GRID RUNNER
19 MEGA LO MANIA
20 VIRUS
21 ROBOCOP
22 AIRBORNE RANGER
23 EXILE
24 CRYSTAL KINGDOM DIZZY
25 MOONSTONE: A HARD DAY'S KNIGHT
26 SKWEEK
27 PINBALL FANTASIES
28 WING COMMANDER
29 THE IMMORTAL
30 BUGGY BOY
31 FIRST SAMURAI
32 KATAKIS
33 OPERATION WOLF
34 STARDUST
35 FIRE AND ICE
36 ANOTHER WORLD
37 JETSTRIKE
38 NEBULUS
39 UNREAL
40 RAINBOW ISLANDS
41 COOL CROC TWINS
42 GUNSHIP 2000
43 BATTLE CHESS
44 F29 RETALIATOR
45 THEME PARK
46 QWAK
47 EYE OF THE BEHOLDER
48 HEROQUEST
49 PIPE DREAM
50 LEMMINGS
51 WALKER
52 RISE OF THE ROBOTS
53 ZOOL
54 BARBARIAN
55 GOBLIIINS
56 IT CAME FROM THE DESERT
57 PINBALL DREAMS
58 CANNON FODDER
59 R-TYPE
60 STAR WARS
61 HEIMDALL
62 FALCON
63 LIONHEART
64 POPULOUS
65 SPACE ACE
66 SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
67 CRUISE FOR A CORPSE
68 OBLITERATOR
69 SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER
70 CADAVER
71 JURASSIC PARK
72 THE NEW ZEALAND STORY
73 PAC-MANIA
74 SPINDIZZY WORLDS
75 WIZBALL
76 FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX
77 PGA EUROPEAN TOUR
78 IK+
79 LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE
80 TETRIS
81 GREAT GIANA SISTERS
82 RAMPAGE
83 XENON 2: MEGABLAST
84 LEGEND OF KYRANDIA
85 RODLAND
86 THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND
87 ARCHER MACLEAN'S POOL


05
06
07
08 09
11
12
13
14 15
20
21
ROBOCOP
22
RANGER
23 24
CRYSTAL KINGDOM DIZZY
29
30
31
32 33
38
39
40
HIGH SCORE
41 42
47
48
49
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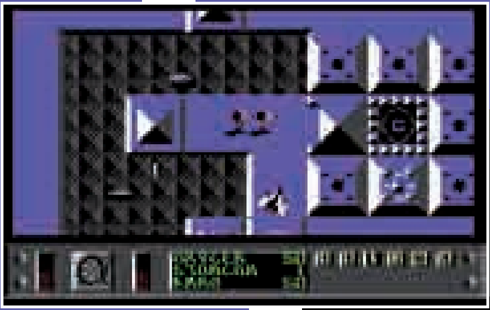
THE MAKING OF…

PARALLAX

Historically overshadowed by Wizball, Sensible Soccer and Cannon Fodder, Parallax nonetheless remains a jewel in Sensible Software's crown. And while it may not be one of Sensi's most typically revered games, it was perhaps their most important, as the game's co-creator, Jon Hare, explains to Craig Grannell…



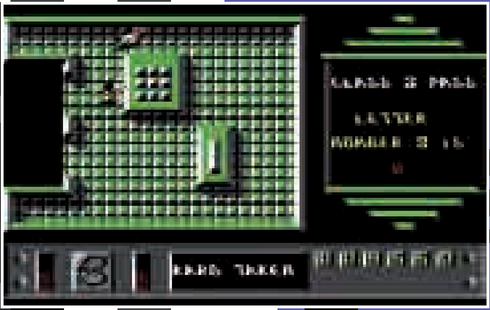
PARALLAX WAS THE FIRST GAME WE EVER DID AS SENSIBLE SOFTWARE WHERE WE HAD FREEDOM - THE FIRST THING WE DID WHERE WE LITERALLY IMPROVISED AND JUST MADE SOMETHING UP. JON HARE



» Even drugged, the scientist knew this was a really stupid time for an impromptu conga session.



» Our hero reasoned that unless someone had dropped something naughty into his tea, he must have slipped into a pesky hyperspace port again.



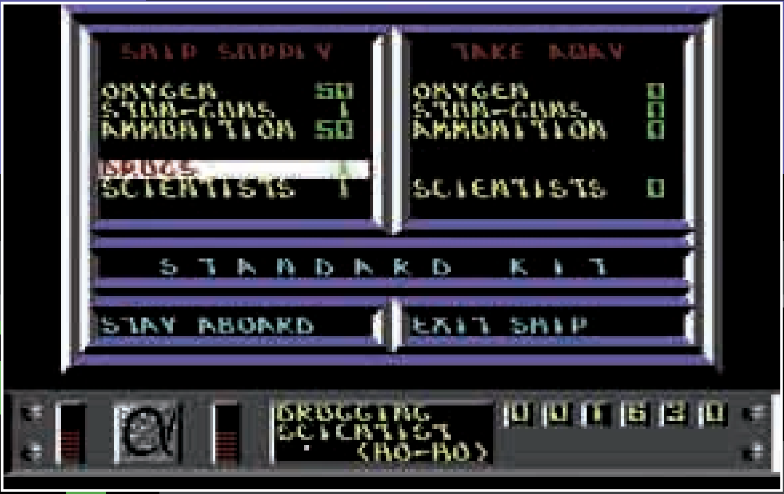
» "I'll have a consonant, please, Carol," joked our hero. The scientist, not amused, proceeded to flee in horror.

It's the mid 1980s and Sensible Software, then comprising Jon Hare and Chris Yates, put the finishing touches to *Twister – Mother of Charlotte* on the Spectrum. Happy with their creation, but not with working to spec, they decided like many others at the time to make the brave move of going it alone. "Chris and myself played in a band for years before this, and so we were used to writing together," recalls Jon, thinking back to the time when *Parallax* – their first true solo game – was germinating. "But *Parallax* was the first game we ever did as Sensible Software where we had freedom – the first thing we did where we literally improvised and just made something up." As with all Sensible Software ('Sensi') titles, strict planning was non-existent – instead, the two 19-year-olds worked like sculptors, creating the game organically, each new discovery driving and informing what followed. "*Parallax* basically started with Chris coming up with a movement system," recalls Jon. "We made a little spaceship, made it fly around and started playing with putting landscapes underneath it, which obviously gave us the parallax. This was quite new at the time. I think we'd maybe seen it in one other thing before."

In rather brazen fashion, this tiny demo formed much of the duo's arsenal with which to target publishers, in the hope of breaking into the industry. "*Parallax* was our first solo game – our first feeling of independent, professional software development," says Jon. "And *Parallax* was also a lucky break," he adds. Exactly how lucky is a matter of opinion, but what happened when Chris and Jon tried to sell their embryonic creation would likely stagger newcomers in today's gaming industry. Fully expecting a long slog around publishers, trying to convince them to take on their game, Jon and Chris were rather shocked when Ocean Software – the first company they took the game to, on the first day of them trying – signed it up and then just let them get on with it.

From this point on, the game's development was rapid. "I did the art and Chris did the programming, and we designed it between ourselves, which was pretty much the way we worked on all our Commodore 64 games," says Jon. Although starting out designing a shoot-'em-up, Sensi's penchant for genre mash-ups – something that would become more apparent with *Wizball* and *Wizkid* – started to shine through. "First of all, we had a pretty traditional shoot-'em-up where you've got a spaceship, you're scrolling around and you're progressing through a map," says Jon. "So once we had that, it was a question of 'get a control system, get a look, and build a story around it'."

The story in *Parallax* concerns a group of astronauts landing on an artificial alien world divided into five zones. Despite the aliens initially seeming cordial, the astronauts soon know otherwise after discovering information being sent across the zones that reveals an imminent attack on Earth. "So the story was about progressing through levels, and we thought it would be fun if you could land the ship," says Jon. Sensi jotted down ideas about what could occur outside the craft: you could run around, pick things up, have foes that you could shoot at, and have a mission



» The scientists, being none-too-bright, won't 'co-operate' until they're given drugs. Or maybe they just like getting high.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WIZBALL
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, C64, IBM PC, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1987-8

SENSIBLE SOCCER
SYSTEMS: AMIGA, ATARI ST, GAME BOY, GENESIS, IBM PC, MEGA CD, SNES
YEAR: 1992-3

CANNON FODDER
SYSTEMS: 3DO, AMIGA, AMIGA CD32, ARCHIMEDES, ATARI ST, GAME BOY COLOR, GENESIS, IBM PC, JAGUAR, SNES
YEAR: 1993-2000



IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN SOFTWARE
» **DEVELOPER:** SENSIBLE SOFTWARE
» **RELEASED:** 1986
» **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1+

THE MAKING OF...

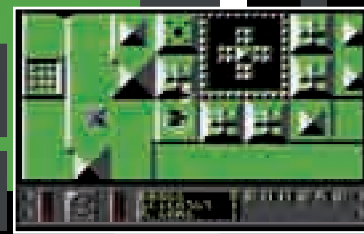
PARALLAX

SPY GAME

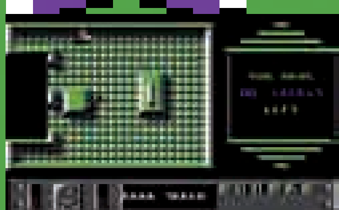
Although proud of Sensi's solo debut, Jon wishes there had been more memory available to enable the development of one of *Parallax*'s core components. "Mainly with what you can do when you walk around, outside the ship," explains Jon. "I'd have liked to have expanded the adventure part – hunting, killing people, getting money, more of an element of kidnapping, spies and that kind of stuff – and for it to have come across a bit more clearly." If this had been implemented, the game's balance would have been tipped in a more strategic direction, almost adding RPG-style overtones: "You'd have been pushed around the level from point to point, so it was more of a little adventure. There would have been more text on the computer screens, telling you about your next sub-mission. 'Your next task is to find Scientist B, kidnap him and bring him back here' – that kind of thing."



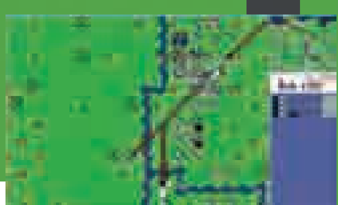
» Shooting (in cold blood) unarmed, cowardly scientists who've no means of escape is all in a day's work for our bloodthirsty hero.



» When he's not shooting scientists in cold blood, our bloodthirsty hero likes to blow them up instead.



» 500 pieces will get you more than a treasure map down my local.



» One of the graphically superior ports in action.

to crack a code in the computer. After refinement, this element of the game tasked players with exploring numerous hangars strewn around the huge levels, locating scientists and kidnapping or shooting them. The latter option enables you to steal their credit cards, used to purchase much-needed supplies or gain one of the five characters for each zone's code. With said code cracked, the zone's 'Central Intelligence Unit' has to be located, a scientist drugged and the code entered, thereby shutting the zone down and making its exit non-lethal.

During the mid 1980s, such depth in a shoot-'em-up was rare, although Jon has his misgivings about Parallax's on-foot component. "Unfortunately, we didn't have much available memory to develop that part of the game," he explains. This, presumably, is why the hangars are all pretty much identical, bar random placement of a handful of computer terminals and foes. "Yeah, there's not a lot there," admits Jon. "We wanted to do more and have a kind of 'spy' element, but that never made it in. To illustrate how tight we were on memory, when you finish *Parallax* the winning message is on the computer screen and it says 'system off'. This is because Chris didn't have the memory for anything more than ten characters on the screen!"

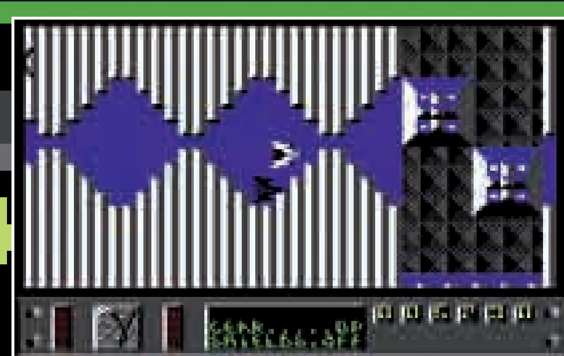
Another thing long-time Sensi fans consider a little lacking in *Parallax* is the duo's trademark humour (which subsequently arrived in explosive fashion in budget *Galaxian* knock-off *Galaxibirds* and then stayed for good), although there are odd nods here and there to Chris and Jon's jovial nature, such as the 'drugging scientist (ho ho)' caption upon 'persuading' one of your 'guests' to assist in entering a completed code into the end-of-level computer. "You've got to remember that *Parallax* was our first solo game," counters Jon. "We were getting to grips with trying to run a company and I think we just wanted to make sure that *Parallax* got done and worked – that we didn't blow it, basically. It's a bit drier than our other stuff; once we'd found our feet with *Parallax*, we allowed our personalities to come out a little more."

If Sensi skimped a little on personality, they certainly didn't on scale. Despite the limitations of the Commodore 64's memory, Jon and Chris managed to cram five massive zones into a single load. "They're huge actually," says Jon, noting that he designed all of the levels in the game. "Coding's the bulk of the work, so as the artist you take on everything else, including level design. They ended up being really quite large – it's a challenge to get to the end of some of them!" More importantly, though, Chris and Jon found the space to squeeze unique elements into the game, thereby helping it to stand out from the crowd. "I think the key thing for me with *Parallax* was the black holes, which suck you in one hole and spit you out the other side, resulting in your ship going a bit faster," says Jon. "They were probably the key innovation in giving the game an identity, along with the walls that closed in on the ship and crushed you."

Another major aspect of the game's appeal was its atmosphere, in part generated by the eye-searing and somewhat filmic attract sequence (the letters of 'Parallax' swirl over rapidly flickering raster bars, and this periodically cuts to a scrolling star field with the current high score overlaid), which contained one of the very best tunes musical maestro Martin Galway created for the Commodore 64. "I think the music Martin did for *Parallax* was brilliant," says Jon, without hesitation. "Sensible Software was extremely lucky in being able to work with the best musicians of the 8- and 16-bit eras: Martin Galway and Richard Joseph." Jon's praise for Martin's contribution and skills perhaps explains why the musician eventually joined the Sensi team: "In my opinion, no-one else got near Martin Galway for the use of the SID chip; he turned it into an instrument. With *Parallax*, he took the game to another level. You load up the game, hear the tune and think, 'Wow! What's this?' It's like a media experience



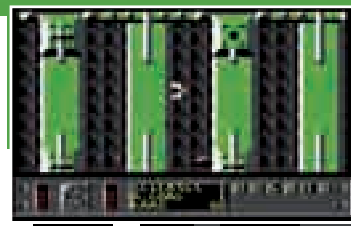
» Our hero discovers first-hand exactly why you need to shut down each central intelligence unit before progressing to the next zone.



» 'Really bad places to end up during a game of *Parallax*' – number 16 in a series of about six billion.



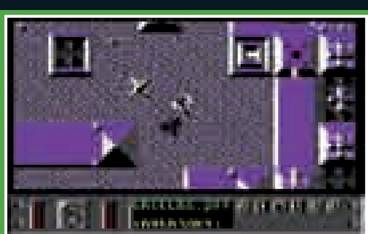
» "This zone's too hard – I can't take it anymore," yelled our hero as he prepared to hurl himself into the abyss.



» So it's straight on at the identical green pillar, a right at the second and then a left at the third. Right? Right?

– it's like, well, not exactly a film, but you're aware it's more of a media experience than *Space Invaders*."

Along with Martin's superlative 11-minute intro tune, created, according to Martin, to "reflect the gigantic visual portions represented by the parallax effect in the game," his influence is most apparent during the game's on-foot elements. Upon touching down and exiting the craft, the game's sparse spot effects are replaced by a haunting, melancholic tune that massively enhances the feeling of isolation and loneliness that the vulnerable astronaut must feel, surrounded by hostile enemies. Ranking up there as a one of the few true computer-music classics, it drives the player on. "For the time, it's quite filmic," suggests Jon. "You get out of the spaceship and there's this tune in the background – it builds up a sense of tension." Jon reckons it's quite weird to examine this element of the game now, because back in the 1980s, games-creators were experimenting with things like sound in games, just to see what could be done and what sound could add, often more subconsciously than deliberately. "These days, you've got the sound and lots of visuals, so it's hard to make things stand out, but occasionally you'll see innovative use of sound, such as in *Grand Theft Auto*, with the radio station that has loads of things on it, or in titles where soundtracks respond to what's happening in the game," says Jon. "But for the time, *Parallax*'s combination of the opening tune and the one when you're walking about gave a sense of… well, 'epic' is the wrong word, but there's a sense of something subliminally seeking attention, to be given more of an accolade as a serious piece of work than just an average shoot-'em-up."

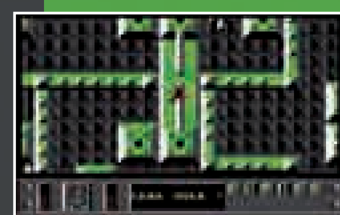


» If you relax your eyes and look slightly off-centre, you'll see the image of an ickle lamb. Awwwwww.

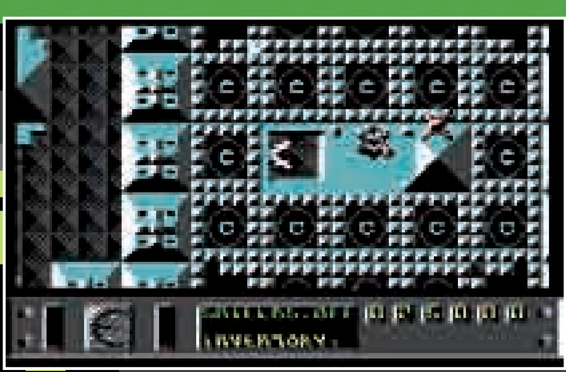
The combination of blasting, exploration, tight coding and excellent audio meant Sensi's solo debut didn't go unnoticed. C&VG Hit and Zzap! Sizzler awards undoubtedly propelled Jon and Chris's work into the minds of C64 owners everywhere, leading to some initial notoriety that would be more fully exploited when *Wizball* arrived a year later. "From our point of view, this was all excellent," says Jon. "You've got to appreciate that we were two 19-year-old kids and this was the first game we'd ever done on our own, and it got signed up on the first day we ever tried to sign it to anyone, with one of the top publishers in the country! And then when it came out, people thought it was great – you couldn't ask for a better start than that." So, even though most minds switch to *Sensible Soccer, Cannon Fodder* or perhaps *Wizball* when the name 'Sensible Software' is mentioned, Jon reckons *Parallax* is a more important game for him. "If I had to pick the single, most important moment in my career, it was the day we went up to Ocean and *Parallax* got signed up. Think about how many people have that kind of luck – you have a new career and on the very first day you try to do something, it works and you come back with a cheque! For us, *Parallax* was the gateway to our careers."

A SENSIBLE REVELATION

Even seasoned *Parallax* players admit it's a tough game. Arming yourself with the level codes doesn't make the game a walk in the park either, so how did Sensi play-test *Parallax*? "Here's a little secret," begins Jon. "Sensi games weren't really play-tested. What we did was make sure the code was bug-free and we play-tested the system so that it worked. Once you've done that and can go through each level once or twice, that was all you really needed to do in those days." Jon mentions *Cannon Fodder* – a game with lots of mechanics and lots of levels – as an example: "Once you've tested each level once, got the number of soldiers right, made sure it works and doesn't crash and that there are no problems, you don't need to do a lot more; and *Parallax* was very similar – once we'd gone through it once, we knew it was doable, so that was it!"



"NO ONE ELSE GOT NEAR MARTIN GALWAY FOR THE USE OF THE SID CHIP - HE TURNED IT INTO AN INSTRUMENT. WITH PARALLAX, HE TOOK THE GAME TO ANOTHER LEVEL. JON HARE



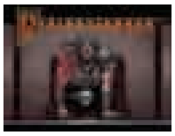
» The architect of the area surrounding the final zone's main terminal was clearly a sadist, only offering means of access from below via a tiny hole – the git.



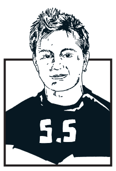
» You're nearly home – or are you? Sensible Software has a nasty surprise in store for anyone hoping for a quick trip to Earth…

POWERMONGER

GET AN ARTIFICIAL LIFE.



- » **PUBLISHER:** BULLFROG
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** RTS
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** AMIGA
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3+



HISTORY

Following up *Populous* was always going to be a difficult, if not impossible task for Bullfrog and Peter Molyneux. Indeed, this spiritual successor to the land-altering divinity of his previous game was a matter of deliberation for critics and gamers alike.

First and foremost, the visual similarity between the two games is incredibly apparent – though once gameplay begins, the two titles quickly drift far apart. It was only natural that players were going to compare these two games (and it seems I can't stop myself even now), though it's ultimately unfair to do so. *Powermonger* is very much the thinking man's *Populous*. While easy to criticise for the apparent lack of direct control over the environment, it's technically very impressive and a renowned coding achievement for the time. All aspects of life are accounted for, and a careful balance has to be achieved between a brutal campaign and environmental awareness.

It features a genuine 3D landscape (as opposed to the excellent use of isometrics in *Populous*) and an ambitious software engine dubbed, at the time, 'artificial life' – a system for granting the many and varied inhabitants of the virtual worlds a high degree of autonomy. While you, the general, can command your armies and the civilians who have taken an allegiance to you, *Powermonger* takes what was controlled by the gods and gives it to a man, demanding a far more strategic approach to dominating a map than divine intervention grants. From farming and fishing to building weapons and waging war, the player is required to carefully manage a populace with a firm, steady and intelligent approach to total dominion.

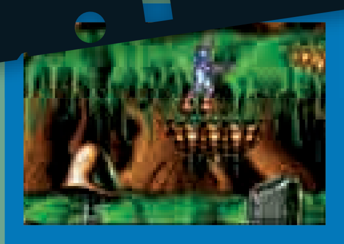
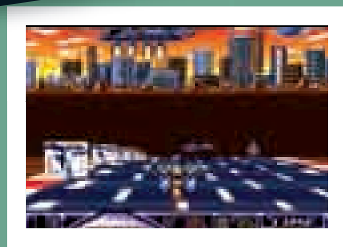
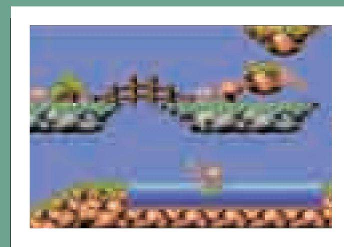
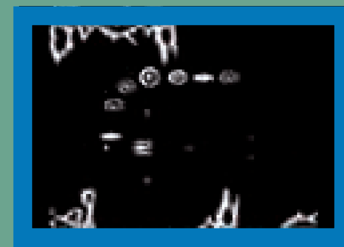
Over the years, *Powermonger* has proven its value and brilliance to the gaming world, far outliving the many twitch games it shared shelf space with back in 1990. The great grandfather of several generations of war strategy games, its echoes can be clearly heard in classics such as *Black & White* all the way up to modern RTS warmongery like *Ancient Wars: Sparta*.



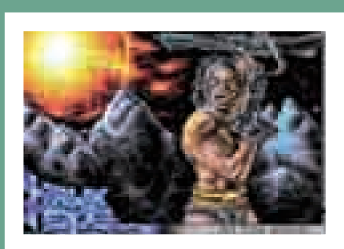


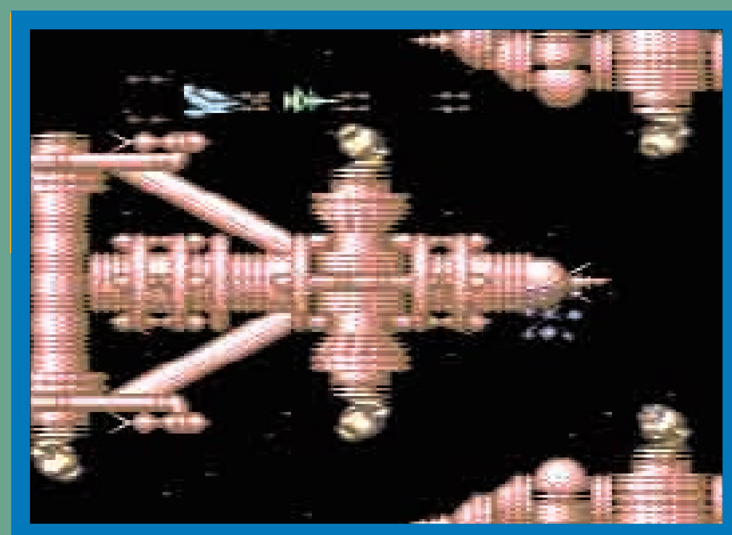
COMPANY PROFILE

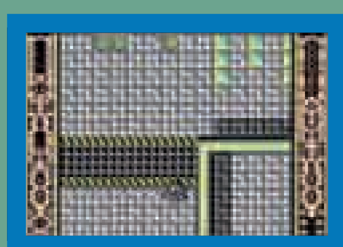
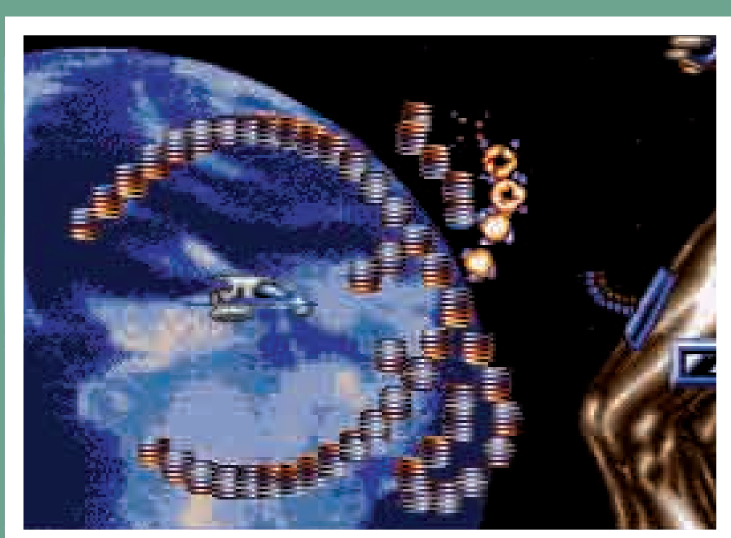
THALAMUS

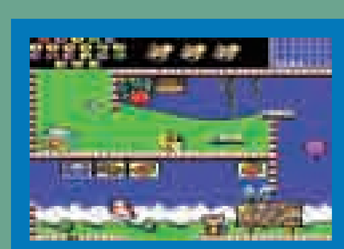
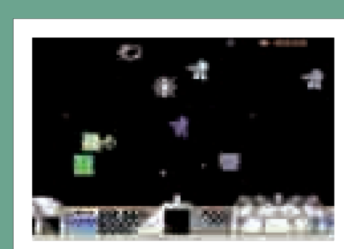





RETRO GAMER LOOKS BACK AT ONE OF THE COMMODORE 64'S MOST POPULAR PUBLISHERS





BRAIN STRAIN

The Thalamus logo stood for quality, with the company specialising in tough shoot-'em-ups and platformers. The escalating costs of developing for new machines saw the firm close its doors after just seven short years. Andrew Fisher looks back at the diverse range of programmers and the aftermath of the company's bankruptcy…

Newsfield director Roger Kean remembers, "Visitors to the London computer game shows at Earls Court and Olympia in late 1985 to early 1986 often suggested that Zzap!, particularly, ought to publish games, so the pressure to do something about it came at first from the reviewers Julian Rignall and Gary Penn. In the end, it was me who finally said Newsfield could do it and found a software publishing house, and then went on to persuade the other directors. It was obvious to us that we would need to poach someone with development and marketing experience, and Andrew 'Flathead' Wright (a regular Ludlow visitor in his role as Activision's PR manager) seemed ideal and was interested."

Many in the industry had doubts about the label's independence from the magazines that would review its products. EMAP, Newsfield's main rival, was selling off its software label Beyond. Roger continues, "We rented premises in London. Admittedly, these were in the same building as the London editorial team for LM Magazine, but then those people had little to no interest in games or the people putting them together.



The Thalamus Star, a response to US Gold's 'History in the Making' ads.

Obviously, as a wholly owned subsidiary, the Newsfield board kept tight reins on the Thalamus operation, but only from a management point of view. As to the Zzap! editorial people, they enjoyed no more or less advance information than they were used to getting from other developers at the time. Indeed, Gary Penn famously rubbished one Thalamus game (*Delta*) in a review."

Ex-Zzap! editor Gordon Houghton continues the story. "The relationship between Newsfield and Thalamus was perfectly professional, as far as I remember. They certainly didn't feel like the same company; in fact, I didn't know they were until someone told me. On an editorial level they kept the two companies quite separate. Newsfield never applied any pressure to give good marks to any game, let alone Thalamus ones. It was never even mentioned. They were quite happy as long as we could back up any rating we awarded with reasons for doing so." Gordon did come under pressure once, but more on that a little later.

Someone else was needed to work alongside Andrew Wright though. "The other Zzap! staff writer, Gary Liddon, was of course a coder, and spent a lot of his spare time slogging away on a C64," continues Roger. Gary had worked at Domark before joining Zzap! and was more than happy to tell us how he got the Thalamus gig. "I got my place at Zzap! through sheer force of will and lots of enthusiasm rather than on the basis of talent," he admits. "To be honest I fitted better in game development and Thalamus was a great step into that industry. Andy Wright was a good friend who was working at Activision as a PR guy, but was really unhappy and wanted to do something else. I had a lot of time for the high-ups at Newsfield having faith in a 19-year-old and a 20-year-old to set up and run a games publisher. It's crazy on the face of it but worked out well for everyone."

THE HELSINKI HEX HERO

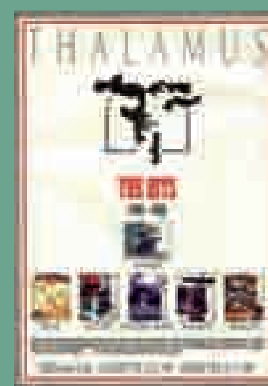
The fledgling company attended the 1986 PCW Show as part of the Newsfield



Pieter Opdam (at the back) meets John and Steve Rowlands on the Thalamus stand, PCW Show 1989 (courtesy of Jason Kelk).

stand. "Julian got chatting to this tall, thin streak from Finland with the unlikely Greek-sounding name Stavros Fasoulas, who had the better part of a C64 game ready," recalls Roger. "Julian kept on raving about it and invited Stavros up to Ludlow after the computer fair ended. Penn and Liddon also admired the game, while arguing that it still fell short of being a winner. Stavros himself still wanted to add a deal more complexity, a process which took a few months while he camped out in the flat Penn and Liddon shared." This flexibility on deadlines and the urge to polish a game would become a Thalamus hallmark. Gary remembers, "We offered loads of feedback to Stavros. To be honest, I think that may have been a bit of a pain in the arse for him. I later ended up a programmer and it's great getting external feedback on what you're working on; however, that feedback needs to come at the right time and place. I'm not sure how much Stavros was helped on *Delta* and *Sanxion* by a daily deluge of suggestions on what would be good in the game."

Stavros called it *Rainbow Warrior* after the bonus sections, but Gary suggested changing the name after the sinking of the Greenpeace ship. So the first Thalamus release became *Sanxion*, with Jon Twiddy's Cyberload, Mat Sneap's loading screen and Rob Hubbard's soundtrack. Eager for a follow-up, work started on *Delta*, another horizontally scrolling shoot-'em-up, with the backgrounds drawing inspiration from *Nemesis* and *Salamander*. Gary regards it as his favourite Thalamus



The Hits, a great compilation of early Thalamus games.

IN THE KNOW

Thalamus was formed in 1986 as the software label of Newsfield, famous for its computer magazines such as CRASH and Zzap!64. With several key Commodore 64 titles under its belt, it looked to expand to 16-bit machines and the Spectrum in the late 1980s. The liquidation of Newsfield in 1991 and the rising cost of development left Thalamus with low funds and many unreleased titles before it closed in 1993. The name was revived for Thalamus Publishing, which released a book of Oliver Frey's artwork in 2006.

THALAMUS

PUBLICITY

The logo was one memorable aspect of Thalamus. Roger says, "I thought Oliver's logo was brilliant, simple but with so much impact. It looked great on T-shirts." Oliver describes it in *The Fantasy Art Of Oliver Frey*: "I wanted something that indicated sensitivity and a determination to win, and an eye gazing into a distant, imagined future or past." The Thalamus Club offered merchandise like watches and free pencils during its short existence. Another collectable is the psychedelic 'Fuzzy' given away with *Creatures*. Former Newsfield writer Richard Eddy joined the company to handle PR.
The box artwork was also used for adverts, with distinctive white borders. The 'Thalamus Star' adverts resembled a tacky tabloid front page, with bizarre headlines ('Aliens stole my brain') and facts about forthcoming releases.
The 'Gold Rush' promotions for *Hawkeye* and *Armalyte* each had special golden cassettes distributed, which could be returned to Thalamus for a prize.



Displaying its Thalamus Europe logo, the disk box for *Nobby The Aardvark* (C64).



Nobby sails past the wreck of the Titanic in his one-aardvark submarine (C64).

game. "I can see it polarises opinion, and can completely understand why some people can't stand it. I really like the music and it hypnotically merged with the gameplay. For me Rob's contribution to that game almost equals Stavros's. We got on really well with Rob and felt he went the extra mile for us. I'd say some of his best work is in the Thalamus games we worked on."

The third game in the Stavros trilogy was *Quedex – The Quest for Ultimate Dexterity*. Each of the ten levels was a maze, requiring different tactics for the shiny metal ball to reach the goal. Stavros had to call a temporary halt to his programming career, returning to Finland for his compulsory national service. After programming the Amiga game *Galactic*, he went on to form Terramarque (which merged with another Finnish label Bloodhouse to become Housemarque).

> "I CAN SEE IT [DELTA] POLARISES OPINION, AND CAN COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND WHY SOME PEOPLE CAN'T STAND IT." GARY LIDDON



Thalamus was in need of new blood, and newly recruited producer Paul Cooper was on hand to work with potential candidates. Gary Liddon had left to join Electronic Arts, while Andrew Wright had gone back to Activision. Gary states, "The trigger was being refused a profit share or ownership in the company. It just seemed fair that given we were creating a lot of value we should have some stake in it. That was pretty firmly rebuffed." Did Gary have any regrets about leaving? "I think when me and Andy left, the company had a great and very defined image along with a couple of great games that'd done very well. The games were 99% down to Stavros but I think we created a way of presenting them to the public that was distinctive and did them no harm. So I'm pretty proud to have been involved in that and I'd say that firm footing we left the company on seemed to work as a lightning rod for some great up and coming talent in the games industry. I know quite a few of the people who made stuff for Thalamus after mine and



Sanxion and *Delta* did not get a great reception on the Spectrum.


Clyde's friend is sliced up by Mr Chainsaw (*Creatures*, C64).



Richard Eddy & Robin Candy (Newsfield employees at the time) model Thalamus T-shirts.



Major Dan Damage's hobbies include origami, skiing and blowing up planets (*Retrograde*, C64).

Andrew's time, and they're really talented people still doing well today."

SECOND WAVE

Martin Walker had previously worked on licensed products including *Back To The Future*, which was completed in rapid time to a strict storyboard. His project for



Cute platformer *Nobby The Aardvark* was released on the C64 but the planned Amiga conversion never saw the light of day.

A DESERVED GOLD MEDAL WENT TO ARMALYTE FROM CYBERDYNE SYSTEMS, A HORIZONTALLY SCROLLING SHOOTER THAT REALLY STRETCHED THE C64. THALAMUS FOUND ITSELF WITH ANOTHER HIT.

Thalamus was a cross between a puzzle game and a shoot-'em-up – *Hunter's Moon*. Martin contributed music and sound effects to other Thalamus games before creating the superb *Citadel* for Electric Dreams. After a few years concentrating on music, Martin left the industry for good.

The next Thalamus release was *Hawkeye*, a game that divided critics and players. The Boys Without Brains created a good-looking game with parallax scrolling, great music by Jeroen Tel and an amazing animated intro sequence (the face of a Xamoxian telling the story behind the game). Beneath the gloss however was a tough, repetitive platform shoot-'em-up. Gordon Houghton came under pressure to give the game a good mark and ultimately it was awarded a Gold Medal. C&VG (published by EMAP) gave it a terrible 3 out of 10, while Commodore User's verdict was a more respectable 8. "I think EMAP underrated it and we (more specifically, I) overrated it," admits Gordon. "I was going to give it a Sizzler at the time, but felt pressured by one of the Thalamus people to up the rating. Not bribery – just heavy persuasion, to which I was unfortunately susceptible. It was my first month in the job and I probably wanted to please too many people too much of the time. It's not a mistake I made again, however; it had nothing to do with the Newsfield people, it was all down to me."

Fortunately, a deserved Gold Medal went to *Armalyte* from Cyberdyne Systems, a horizontally scrolling shooter that really stretched the C64. With an eerie soundtrack from Martin Walker and some extremely striking visuals, Thalamus found itself with yet another hit. "*Armalyte* was the best horizontal shooter on the C64, and still one of my favourite shooters today," states Gordon. (For more on *Armalyte*, see issue 36's 'Making of' article.) The team of Dan Phillips, Robin Levy and John Kemp moved to System 3 and the planned sequel was never finished.

PLATFORMS & PITFALLS

Keen to stretch its wings to other formats, Thalamus created *Mind-Roll*, an Amiga and PC conversion of *Quedex*, followed by the Spectrum conversion of *Sanxion*. Another high-scoring debut game was *Retrograde* from Apex Computer Productions – John and Steve Rowlands. Thalamus took a gamble on Apex's short track record in the industry, which paid off. The problem was the speed at which finished games were being released. Several key projects, like *The Search for Sharla*, were proving to be very slow in development – but Thalamus chose not to rush games out of the door.

In 1990, Apex created *Creatures* – or 'Clyde Radcliffe Exterminates All The Unfriendly Repulsive Earth-ridden Slime' to use its full title. The game had a dark sense of humour; between scrolling levels filled with cute enemies, Clyde would have to rescue his fellow Fuzzies from devious 'Acme' torture devices. The sequel had six fiendish devices to stop, with more variety coming from three other sub-games. Helping out was Andy



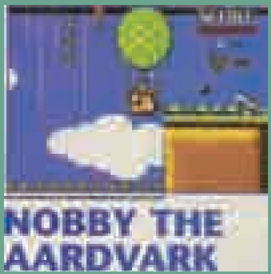
The Amiga version of *Creatures* did not go down well.



Platform shoot-'em-up *Hawkeye* received very mixed reviews.

UNRELEASED GAMES

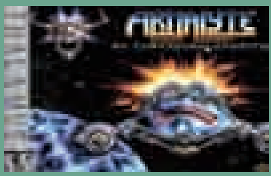
Thalamus closed its doors with several titles left incomplete. Among the most eagerly anticipated was *The Search for Sharla*, a 3D strategy game in the style of *Lords of Midnight*. All that survives are screenshots and the novella. The licensed games *Q8 Team Ford Rally Simulation* and *Arsenal FC* also failed to reach the shelves, despite lots of publicity. Conversions figure highly on the AWOL list. The Spectrum versions of *Creatures*, *Armalyte* and *Bombuzal* (under licence from Image Works, the Mirrorsoft label) did not get finished, but a demo of *Armalyte* appeared on a Your Sinclair covertape. *Armalyte 2* for the C64 got as far as demo form, with a weapon shop and reused graphics. Amiga users missed out on *Beastmaster* (inspired by *Shadow Of The Beast*), *Nobby The Aardvark* and *Restrictor* (described by programmer Richard Underhill as "a cross between *Galaxy Force* and *OutRun*/*Afterburner*").



FINEST HOUR

ARMALYTE (C64, 1988)

Regularly topping polls for the best shoot-'em-up on the Commodore 64, there can only be one winner here. Everything works so well, from the extra weapons to the soundtrack. Cyberdyne Systems may have been unhappy with the marketing ploy of labelling it 'Delta 2' but it surpasses the gameplay of the earlier Stavros Fasoulas title. Play it on the original machine though: the Amiga and ST conversion (*Armalyte: The Final Run*) is a pale imitation.



COMPANY PROFILE

THALAMUS



» Maximus collected Acme crates to assemble a vehicle, enabling him to get to the next level (*Summer Camp*, C64).

Roberts, Commodore Format's tips expert. After writing a letter full of suggestions to the Rowlands, Andy ended up heavily involved in both games – from writing the manuals to designing graphics.

John Ferrari took up programming to fill the winter months when he wasn't working as a builder. After producing budget titles for Codemasters, John came up with *Summer Camp*. Maximus Mouse had to get to the Moon via a series of single-screen sections to find an American flag for the opening of Camp Wotadump. John also worked on the *Arsenal FC* football game, viewed from the side when other games had adopted the overhead *Kick Off*-style view. Sadly, John died in 1996.

Thalamus published more titles for the Amiga and ST, but they were less well received. The 16-bit conversion of *Creatures* failed to make much impact, and Pieter Opdam's *Venom Wing* and *Borobodur* both had great graphics but difficult gameplay. Graphic artist Metin Seven worked alongside Pieter. Metin recalls, "It was like a dream signing a contract with Thalamus. They had become a respected name in the games business. I'll never forget when Paul



» *Venom Wing* was called 'Hawkwind' during development.

Cooper came over to the Netherlands for a few days, and during that weekend we signed the contract. When the game was released it received reviews ranging from bad to satisfactory, and the satisfactory ones were published in Zzap!64 and The Games Machine, both magazines from the Newsfield publishing company, who were also the owner of Thalamus." A dispute between Pieter, Metin and musician Ramon Braumuller over the high difficulty level led to the team splitting up. "Thalamus did pay a sum of money that corresponded to the proceeds they had estimated, but we have never checked what the actual proceeds from all *Venom Wing* sales were. Ramon and I used our share of the proceeds to travel to Britain and attend the Personal Computer World show together with Pieter, to meet the people of Thalamus there." Pieter would go on to work at Team 17 on projects including *Worms*, while Metin and Ramon joined forces with programmer Reinier van Vliet to write games including *Hoi* and *Clockwiser*.

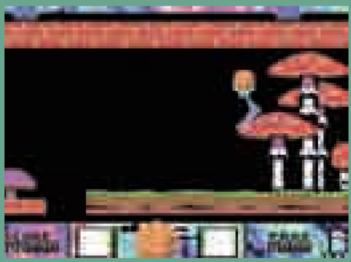
THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

A big shock occurred when Newsfield went into liquidation. Thalamus had to go out on its own, trading as Thalamus Europe. Roger reveals, "My recollection is a bit hazy, but we let the



» *Delta*'s innovative Mix-e-load system (C64).

GAMES REVIEWS

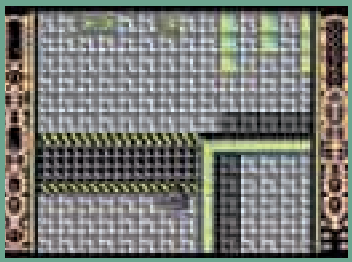


HEATSEEKER

C64, 1990

» Programmer Paul O' Malley's sequel to his earlier game *Arac* has an environmental theme and an unusual style. The player controlls a Leg as it hops around the rainforest. On top is the Ball, which can be thrown out to kill enemies and, more importantly, absorb heat from fires. This heat can then be passed on to giant Plants, which open their leaves to protect the forest against acid rain.

81%



SNARE

C64, 1989

» A temporal portal hides a maze with the promise of a rich reward at the end of it. Programmer Rob Stevens took elements of *Tron*'s light-cycle game and created some fiendish puzzles. Jumping, shooting aliens and hitting switches are made more difficult by the snap 90° turns of the screen as you move. Shiny graphics and great music from Martin Walker round out the experience, underrated at the time.

90%



RETROGRADE

C64, 1989

» John and Steve Rowlands' rock-hard blaster has a very clever weapons upgrade system. The first step is collecting cash and the 'planet busters' from the surface. Then it's vertically scrolling platforms as you head down the ducts into the core. With the planet in ruins, the hero flies off to confront a huge mothership that is destroyed by shooting it to bits. A challenging game that is brilliantly presented.

95%



HUNTER'S MOON

C64, 1987

» Martin Walker's polished shoot-'em-up is worth revisiting. The enemy workers 'draw' the walls of the level as the player's Hunter spacecraft searches for starcells that show the way home. The puzzle elements become more devious later on, and the off-duty 'loop trainer' mode recalls Jeff Minter's work. An end sequence by Robin Levy and Cyberdyne Systems and some unusual sound FX make it memorable.

93%



WINTER CAMP

C64 & AMIGA, 1992

» What made this special were the cartoon graphics and varied styles of play. Maximus Mouse has to learn to ice skate, canoes down a river, throws snowballs in an *Operation Wolf* style level, follows a tune played on icicles and rolls down the mountain side in a giant snowball. All this to stop an eagle causing an avalanche! Elements of the game were inspired by a reader competition in Zzap!64.

86%



BOROBODUR

AMIGA, 1992

» *Venom Wing* was very tough, and Pieter Opdam's next game was just as difficult. Subtitled 'The Planet of Doom', *Borobodur* starts out as a platform game with some very polished graphics. After fighting your way through the jungle, it then switches to a 3D hoverbike racing game. The two styles alternate until you reach the final bad guy in his huge robot suit. Very tough, but it looked great.

79%

then-management of Thalamus (which included David Birch) do a management buy-out on some kind of sliding payment deal over time; this was a short while before Newsfield's September '91 demise. Thalamus carried on for about a further two years, but in the end it was caught out in the squeeze of underfunding and the increased costs of developing for the new console devices. Certainly, before Newsfield let go of control, the drain on central funds due to the rapidly increasing development times was having a detrimental effect – if not on final profits, certainly on cash flow. I would never go so far as to say that Thalamus Games brought Newsfield down, but it definitely contributed."

"The big problem was Newsfield Publications going bankrupt," admits musician Ashley Hogg. "That was a short way into *Nobby The Aardvark* if I recall. For the most part, we were left to our own devices but, as usually happens, the project took longer than we were hoping. The up-front advance was pretty low, offset by a higher royalty rate, but cash was tight – always a problem for small developers anyway. Thalamus got bought out and Codemasters asked me to move to their locale and help out with a project. Dave Clarke and Jon Smyth finished up the C64 version over the following few months and eventually it got a release. The Amiga version died right there. But I was pleased that I managed to cram so much music into the C64 version." As for his memories of Thalamus Europe, at that time, "Thalamus was a really small outfit basically run by one guy out of a small office. Even handling production of one game, that was pretty tight back then. I also seem to remember the liquidators' reports making interesting reading…"

> "AFTER SPENDING WHAT SEEMED LIKE DAYS ON THE PHONE WITH LAWYERS AND LIQUIDATORS, ALL OF THE THALAMUS TITLES, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF STAVROS'S GAMES, WERE LINED UP FOR A PHOENIX-LIKE REBIRTH." ANDY ROBERTS

Thalamus struck a deal with budget label Kixx to republish many of the older titles and provide much-needed cash. The last game to be released was *S.U.B.* (Strategic Underwater Battles), an Amiga strategy title imported and translated by Thalamus. The 62% score from Amiga Power was a sad end. Left in limbo were several titles (see UNRELEASED GAMES) including the potentially lucrative *Arsenal FC*. Gary Liddon says, "Best memory? Well it's just one big best memory. As for the worst? It was sad to see it decline over the years, then going bust."

GAME OVER?

There was life after death (of a sort) for Thalamus. Andy Roberts started a new label called Thalamus Interactive. With Steve and John Rowlands on board, as well as C64 coder Jon Wells, the company was responsible for *Zidane Generation Football* and *International Karate Advance* on Game Boy formats. Andy says, "The initial premise was to bring the back catalogue to modern-day formats such as the Game Boy Color (which was just entering the peak of its life-cycle). After spending what seemed like days on the phone with lawyers and liquidators, all of the Thalamus titles, with the exception of Stavros's games, were lined up for a phoenix-like rebirth. The furthest we got was a GBA demo; getting original product on to the Game Boy was exceedingly difficult, most publishers preferring the security of a big-name licence. And thus we switched to developing original ideas and IPs, but with the emphasis firmly on quality (I'd always liked the way that the gloss and polish of Thalamus titles was of an exceptionally high standard; you were always guaranteed a top-notch product)." According to Andy, "The Thalamus back catalogue remains locked in a fireproof safe, just waiting for the right moment to make a comeback."

Roger Kean and Oliver Frey formed a new company called Thalamus Publishing. The book most games fans were interested in appeared in April 2006 – *The Fantasy Art Of Oliver Frey*, including several examples of Oli's artwork for Thalamus. Roger says, "There has been a decade-long discussion about a History of Video Gaming but it always looked like no-one would be that interested. Up until 1996 we were still heavily involved in creating hint and tip books on games for various book publishers like Virgin, Carlton and Prima in the United States. *The Fantasy Art Of Oliver Frey* by no means featured all the material the still remains in Oli's possession, so there will probably be a second volume for everyone to enjoy in another year."



AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

CREEPY (Amiga, 1990)

Not the finest moment in Thalamus's history, *Creepy* is an uninspired clone of *Snake* produced by a French team. The worm slithers around a maze, eating pellets and trying to avoid crashing into its own tail as it grows. It really did not stretch the Amiga or gamers and soon proved frustrating.

THE DELTA CONTROVERSY

Delta on the Commodore 64 had great graphics, an amazing in-game tune from Rob Hubbard (part Pink Floyd, part Philip Glass as suggested by Gary Liddon), and the unforgettable Mix-e-load: with a joystick, C64 users could remix the Rob Hubbard loading music. It also had the power-ups its predecessor *Sanxion* lacked. But *Delta* only got a 74% rating from Zzap! (and a bad review from Gary Penn in particular), due to the need to learn patterns and the tricky credits system for earning extra weapons (trying to pick up something you don't have enough credits for kills you, and you need to keep topping up the extras). *Delta* did earn a Screen Star from EMAP's Commodore User, but Your Sinclair voted the Spectrum version (*Delta Charge*) 'worst game of the year' in 1990. Many put this down to the rivalry between YS and Crash.

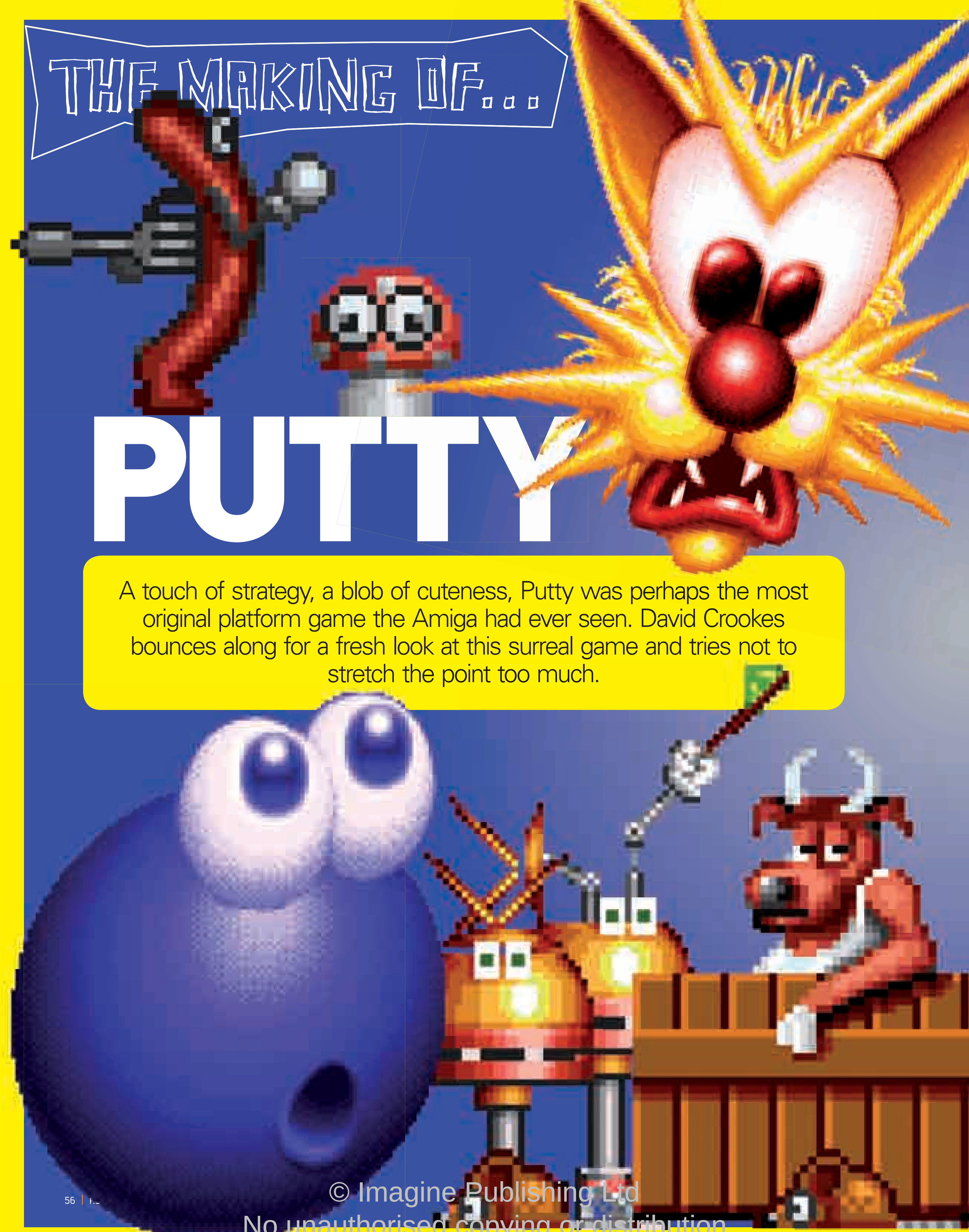


» On the Planet of Doom, our hero narrowly avoids running into a Ferrari, a Lamborghini and a Batmobile… (*Borobodur*, Amiga).



» More frosty shenanigans with the aptly named *Winter Camp*.





THE MAKING OF...

PUTTY

A touch of strategy, a blob of cuteness, Putty was perhaps the most original platform game the Amiga had ever seen. David Crookes bounces along for a fresh look at this surreal game and tries not to stretch the point too much.

WHEN System 3 announced it was going to be making a game about a blob of putty, it was a bit of a surprise. *Last Ninja*? *Death Star Interceptor*? *Fuzzball* aside, these guys had been kicking up grit in most of their previous games, not producing console-style cutesy platformers.

But as the cold snap of winter began to set in at the end of 1991, System 3 started to leak out firm news of the imminent release of *Silly Putty*. It was going to be a licensed tie-in with the popular silicone plastic toy of the same name. More than that, though, it was to be stark raving bonkers.

Not surprising then that the idea, which had begun months earlier, had germinated in the hallucinating head of graphic artist Phil Thornton in the searing heat of India.

During one particularly baking hot day, the high temperature, coupled with a few beers, had made Thornton ill. Lying in bed and staring at the ceiling, his fever kicking in, he began to dream. "He was having these hallucinations," recalls Dan Phillips, *Putty*'s lead programmer. "One of them involved a ball which moved around the room. There were also these giant insects that kept getting in the way and parts of the room would absorb each other and form blobs."



» Meow! It's that cat again, bursting through the screen.

They were dreams that would inspire rather than freak, however. Thornton awoke, his head buzzing with ideas for a brand-new game. A piece of putty, which was pliable, flexible, mouldable, squishy and squashy, he surmised, would make for a cracking character. Throw it into a trippy world where Terminator Carrots yell "Uzi 9 centimetre" before firing oversized bullets at you, where there are deranged moggies and Scouse sausages screaming "Come on then, I'll have you now, eh?" and where high-pitched voices and catchphrases assault your ears and you're talking one helluva crazily kooky title.

Although the game eventually involved a ball of putty, Thornton had originally intended to create a game based on a piece of elastic but he felt it would be too limiting in its capabilities. By opting for putty instead, he felt he could be far more versatile with the main character.

After grabbing a pen and sketching out what he wanted the central sprite to do, he used Moviesetter – an Amiga animation package – to put together a demo. He was hoping to hawk it around software houses to persuade a more able coder to pull the game's many intricate scenes together. His first stop was System 3 where he made an appointment to see boss Mark Cale. "I certainly remember Phil bringing the demo in," says Cale. "He basically presented the idea, bizarre as it was, and I was impressed straight away so I told him to start working on it. I had the Nintendo market primarily in mind at the time but I also wanted to release the game on the Amiga. In my mind, *Putty* was unique and different. I'd never seen anything like it before – and I've yet to see anything like it since."

"I WAS IMPRESSED STRAIGHT AWAY… IN MY MIND, PUTTY WAS UNIQUE AND DIFFERENT. I'D NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE - AND I'VE YET TO SEE ANYTHING LIKE IT SINCE." MARK CALE

With Phillips assigned as lead programmer, work began using a 286 PC and the PDS development software. "It really helped getting the animated demos together as I could go through the ideas with Dan," said Phil at the time. "It also allowed us to have all the necessary graphics ready for implementation in the code. It allowed us to accurately gauge just how much memory each idea would need."

Not one to miss a trick, Cale approached the makers of the Silly Putty toy and a business idea for a licensed tie-in game was thrashed out. It was quite ironic, given that his brother, Adrian, had appeared in an advertisement for the toy 15 years earlier as a young magician – more so since Adrian was System 3's publicity manager and had a big hand in creating the hype for the game. One of the ideas System 3 had had was to make *Silly Putty* the first instantly



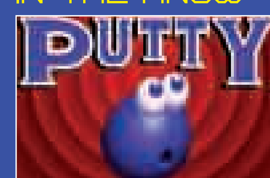
» Wide-eyed and blue, System 3 wanted Putty to be the Amiga's mascot.

AMIGA RELEASE IMMINENT?

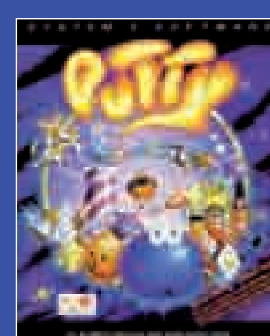
Although *Putty Squad* was completed by System 3 and favourably reviewed in Amiga magazines, it was never released for its intended machine, the A1200. That has left some Amiga fans tearing out their hair in a desperate attempt to find a copy. What happened? System 3 boss Mark Cale says: "We just felt there wasn't an Amiga market at that time so we didn't want to go to the expense of manufacturing and distributing the game. I made the decision to can it." So where is the game? "It's locked away and it's unlikely it will be released soon, certainly not for profit anyway. I wouldn't charge for it – that wouldn't be fair after all this time." When pushed, however, he added: "Releasing it is something I may look at further down the line, perhaps as a freebie on our website but at the moment there are no plans. I would want to see a strong Amiga emulator running the program in the way we intended before I consider it." There is no way the original C64 Putty will be released, however: "The code just wasn't of the quality expected at System 3."



IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** SYSTEM 3
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** AROUND £5



THE MAKING OF... PUTTY

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DEATH STAR INTERCEPTOR
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM, C64
YEAR: 1984

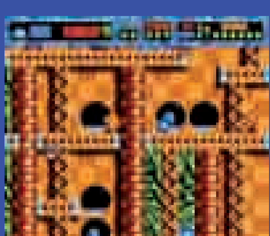
LAST NINJA
SYSTEMS: COMMODORE 64 (SYSTEM 3) APPLE IIGS, ATARI ST, MS-DOS (ACTIVISION) BBC MICRO/ACORN ELECTRON, ACORN ARCHIMEDES (SUPERIOR SOFTWARE), AMIGA (AS LAST NINJA REMIX)
YEAR: 1987

TUSKER
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM, C64, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, AMIGA
YEAR: 1989

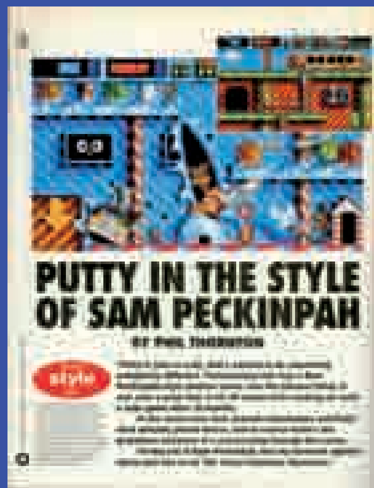




» Mark Cale, boss of System 3.



» A SNES version of the game was also created. This became the machine of choice for sequel *Putty Squad*.



PUTTY IN THE STYLE OF SAM PECKINPAH

» In the October 1992 issue of Amiga Power, Phil Thornton showed readers how *Putty* would have looked had it been created in the style of slasher-flick film director Sam Peckinpah.

loadable cartridge game for the Amiga, which would have been plugged into the computer's printer port. But in August 1991, some six months after announcing it was going to publish cartridge games, the concept was canned – even though many people had praised the idea, saying it would have led to larger games with better graphics and sound as well as a reduction in piracy. The problem was cost. It was worked out that *Silly Putty* would have cost £60 on cartridge, which was deemed prohibitive. Instead, the game was created for release on disk. Phillips, however, had enough on his plate worrying about how to pull the whole thing together to even think about the effect the lack of a cartridge release would have (the game would have been twice as big on cartridge).

"The first thing I had to do was get to grips with the Amiga itself," says Phillips, who had previously worked on the Commodore 64. "It had an extensive instruction set and some new hardware graphics processes such as Blitting. The bitmap scrolling, in particular, was very CPC/Blitter intensive. Once we got over the problems that caused, though, it was a case of getting some sprites moving on screen. We called on the expertise of programmer Rob Stevens to help out with a level editor and animation system. After that it was just a case of a few AI routines, recording a bucket load of silly SFX and banging through all the levels."

The game was originally going to be a flip-screen platformer but this was later changed to a scroller. "I put scrolling in for a laugh," continues Phillips. "But then I found the frame-rate didn't suffer too much even though the AI was running three times as many enemies, so I made a few tweaks and ditched the flip-screen."



» Absorb, create babies, have fun. *Putty* is a bizarre game.

The big thing which caught the imagination, however, was the main character itself. Putty had many different attributes: from jumping, walking along platforms and stretching over vast distances, to punching, absorbing enemies and taking their energy. By melting into the floor, the blue globule could avoid being hurt – handy when you've got 24 stages to go at. Increasing in size then popping, which killed any nearby enemies, was also great fun but how difficult was it to create a control method for a character such as this?

"Putty was different to the other games I had worked on," says Phillips. "But luckily the Commodore 64 version was in parallel development for a few months so programmer John Kemp helped out by writing the first version of the control method on the C64. I converted it to the Amiga later, refining it and adding a few extra nodes. It was easier to do it this way. Unfortunately, the C64 market had died and John had left to pursue a different career so that version was never released."

The enemies also had their own various attributes. "Basic movement came first," says Phillips. "It normally just involved platform patrolling until Putty came into range and then they would engage in some kind of attack. I used a simple state machine for each bit with the enemies basically walking left, then jumping, turning around and firing. Each bit was then tailored to the attributes of that particular character."

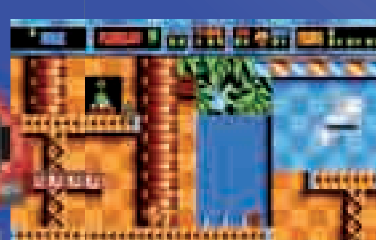
The enemies were hilarious, their catchphrases lighting up the game. Thornton loved Tex Avery cartoons and enjoyed Screwball Squirrel in particular. He was inspired by these animations to the point where he wanted *Putty* to be as cartoon-like as possible, right down to the one-megabyte worth of sound effects which was taken from Thornton's large



» King Putty rules over the platform genre.

"WE HAD TO INTRODUCE A TRAINING MODE. THE FIRST LEVEL WAS PRETTY BRUTAL." DAN PHILLIPS

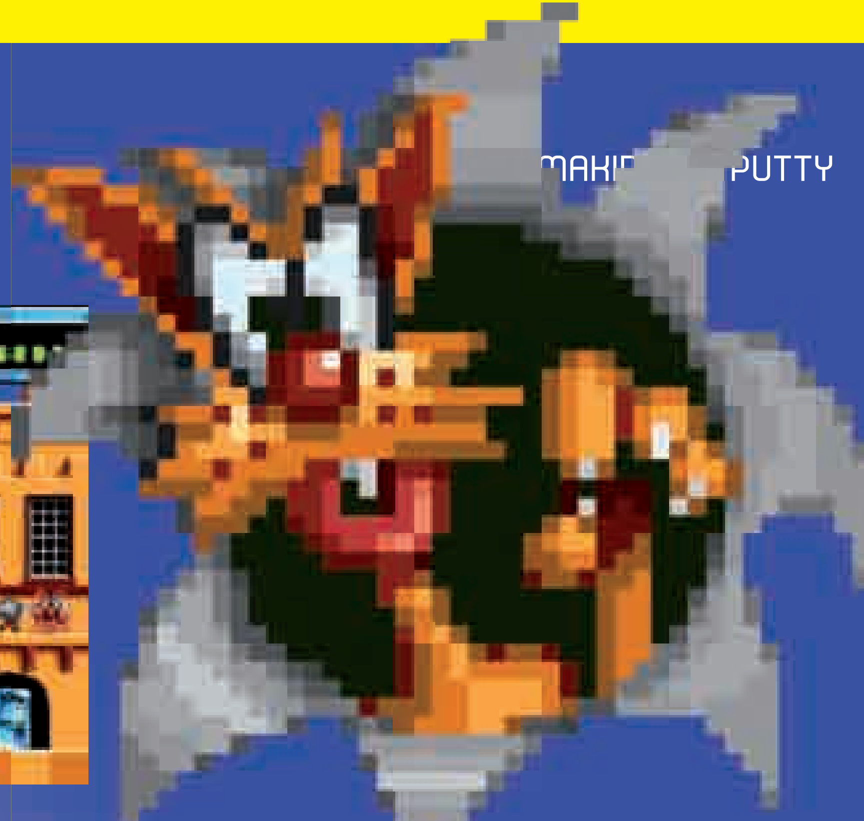




» Too bad, you've died again.



» Terminator carrots – get away from them or they'll be back.





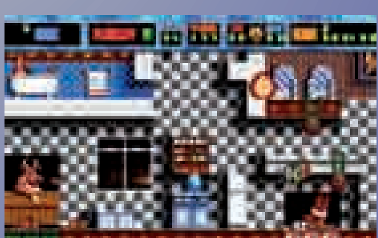
» Scouse sausages. Hmm… tasty. Not.

Laser Disc collection. A cacophony of sampled sounds was used for the voices and spot effects such as the slurps and the utterances of the cat, which burst through the screen, and they had a cinematic edge to them. The music was written by the extremely talented Richard Joseph, who sadly died of lung cancer on 5 March 2007 at the age of 54.

"Getting the graphics and animation to work and seeing it come together was fun," Cale recalls. "But the sound effects were something else altogether. We could really let our imaginations run riot. The belching, for instance, was great British humour."

Of course, with all of this madness to hand, it would have been a shame to spoil the game with a poor back-story. *Putty* did not disappoint, the game revolving around the tale of evil wizard Dazzledaze banishing Putty's squishy pals from Putty Moon to earth. Putty needed the help of Bots, natives of the planet Constructo, which Putty Moon orbits. By rounding up the Bots, Putty could organise the building of a huge tower stretching from Earth to Putty Moon, allowing them all to go back home and defeat Dazzledaze. The only problem was that not many players could complete the first level of the game. "We had to introduce a training mode," says Phillips. "The first level was pretty brutal."

By the time the game was released in October 1992 – a good two years after the first work began – *Silly Putty* was no longer a licensed product. It was also simply called *Putty*. But that was just another twist in the tale of this game, which nevertheless achieved rave magazine reviews. And, even better for System 3, a deal was tied up with Commodore to place *Putty* in its new A600 bundle. That was exciting for Cale who wanted Putty to become an Amiga mascot to rival Sonic and Mario.



» The cartoon graphics of Putty was unique.

Although that didn't happen, *Putty* was also released on the SNES in 1993, as *Super Putty*; featuring licensed music tracks it was a huge success. Phillips left System 3 after *Putty* but a sequel, *Putty Squad*, was released in 1994 for the SNES and an Amiga version was created but never released. In the midst of all of this, *Putty* was re-released on budget in February 1994 (as *Silly Putty*).

So what are Phillips's overriding memories of the original game? "*Putty* was a challenge. Resisting talking to the receptionists when I should have been working was hard enough but, for the first three months on the project, we couldn't get the remote downloading to work from PC to Amiga. We replaced pretty much every component without success, then one day I tried it with the monitor turned off – the magnetic shielding was thinner than a Kit Kat wrapper and it was scrambling the code as it made its way down the cable. It was a mad game and we had just as mad a time putting it together."

But was it worth it? "Definitely," says Cale. "All credit for the game's ideas has to go to Phil and I'm glad we pushed ahead. When you look at games today, you see what people were achieving back then. In those days you didn't need a licence to get shelf space but now you have to invest a lot more in a game. A lot are unoriginal and follow a set formula as a result. *Putty*, for me, will always be a landmark title."



» So you think this game is easy? Pigs'll fly… er, jump on space hoppers.



» Cats in spaceships. We've seen it all now.

MORE BLOBS

Putty Squad was released for the SNES and it had a two-player mode, taking the original game on in leaps and bounds. Being able to float like a balloon was a nifty trick too.

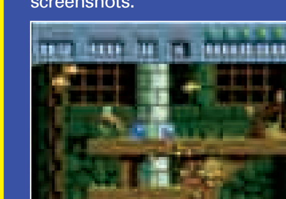
John Twiddy created the Amiga version and Chris Butler worked on the SNES game. Again, Phil Thornton worked on the graphics with additional help from artist Nick Lee.

Of the two, Lee prefers the Amiga version: "It was better than the SNES version," he says. "John and I added a lot more cosmetic details to it."

But what next for *Putty*? Cale tells us: "We're releasing a new version of *Putty* next year on the PSP and DS. I'll be releasing full details later in the year and I want to keep a lot of it under wraps. I'm looking at taking the concept and creating something new, though, rather than a straight port of the existing two games."

In the meantime, check out the brilliant fans' site Putty Moon at http://puttymoon.predseda.com

Thanks to the website's editors for helping to provide screenshots.



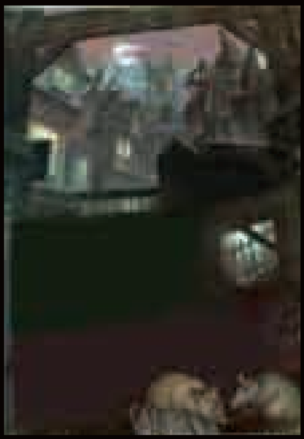
Worth a Thousand Words

The Art of C&VG

LAST MONTH'S 'THE DEFINITIVE FROGGER' LEFT EVEN RG'S DEDICATED HISTORIAN STUART CAMPBELL'S BRAIN SO BROKEN THAT HE COULDN'T FACE DOING ANY COMPLICATED RESEARCH THIS MONTH. SO WE GAVE HIM SOME NICE PRETTY PICTURES TO LOOK AT INSTEAD.



» {Above} doriancross.tif - Dorian Cross didn't just do character work. He could also knock out evocative and slightly melancholy space scenes like this.



The magazine you hold in your hands, viewers, is the last of its kind. Now, don't panic – Retro Gamer isn't about to close down. (Or at least, if it is nobody's told me about it. Come to think of it, where IS last month's pay cheque?) But there's something RG does, that used to be enormously commonplace, but which no other videogames magazine has done for years. Can you guess what it is? See if you can figure it out before I tell you, which will be in about three paragraphs' time.

Most of the publications you'll find on the videogames shelf at your local newsagents aren't 'magazines' in the traditional sense of the word at all – they're glorified sales brochures, produced by people who quite openly see themselves not as the servants of their readers but as extensions of the games industry's PR sector. (Almost the entire writing staff of one widely respected current title, for example, resigned a few years ago when they were told by their own management, among other things, that they couldn't give games published by a certain publisher review scores lower than five out of ten.) By comparison, 25, 15 and maybe even ten years ago, games mags were primarily a hobbyist affair, written for (and by) a community of enthusiasts as the only means of sharing information about their common pastime. Because most game publishers were tiny companies operating out of someone's back bedroom or a flat above a chip shop, there were no big marketing departments around to either dazzle reviewers with expensive promotional trips to exotic foreign lands, or bully them with threats of withdrawing thousands of pounds in



» "Excuse me, but you'll have to leave. If we print a crude racial stereotype like this in the 21st century we'll all be sued."

lucrative advertising in one fell swoop. Combined with the absence of the internet – leading to circulation figures on average two or three times that of a modern games mag, despite the much smaller total number of gamers in existence – this situation led to a relative financial stability when it came to planning the magazine's budget. So that's one thing.

Here's another thing: nowadays, sleek, glamorous, state-of-the-art publications like Retro Gamer take advantage of superb modern screenshot technology to produce beautiful images of games. Whether it's giant blown-up single shots or lovely pieced-together maps showing entire gameworlds at a single glance, it's easy for us to show you exactly what a game looks like. Readers (and mag editors) take this technology for granted now, but in bygone times (even as recently as the early Nineties, when your reporter first joined the massed ranks of videogame journalism), things weren't quite so simple. Back in those days, publishing was still largely a physical business as opposed to a digital one, and a great many magazines still illustrated reviews and the like by the primitive (and expensive) method of having a photographer point a stills camera at the TV screen while the game was being played, and taking a picture of it. It's difficult on a technical level to photograph moving images on a TV screen, though, and this method delivers extremely variable results (especially when printed in black and white, as many games mags still predominantly were throughout the Eighties), and some publications – one in particular – chose to find a rather more creative solution to the problem.

If you're a bit slow, or can't stand the tension any more, or just realised immediately on looking at all the great big pictures splashed all over the place, we're talking about custom artwork – and specifically that found in the UK's first and longest-running (23 years, until it was bought and closed by a rival publisher in 2004) games magazine, Computer & Video Games.

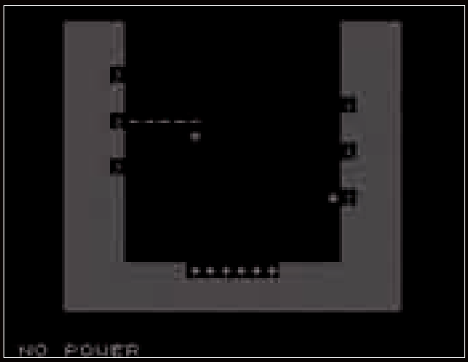
Once a staple of the videogames journal, hand-drawn and painted illustrations compensated for crude Eighties graphics and primitive production methods, but also helped to give magazines like Crash, Zzap! and Your Sinclair the individual senses of character and personality that made them stand out from each other. In the modern world that loss of character has been one of the factors causing sales to plummet, as paper publications fail to cultivate a unique identity that would help give them a selling point over the fast-moving but bland and corporate world of internet games journalism. But the editors of the Eighties would no sooner have contemplated doing away with custom artwork than today's editors would try to live without rehashed press-release 'news', pre-supplied 'interviews', generic preview 'screenshots' taken from cut-scenes, and advertiser-approved 'review' scores [Hey, enough with the 'quote marks' – Ed]. Artwork was an intrinsic, obvious and non-negotiable part of magazine creation, so before we descend any further into the gloomy abyss of modern mainstream games mags, let's take a few pages out of our busy schedule to celebrate the halcyon days of the videogames illustrator, and perhaps offer a silent prayer of gratitude that at least one publication (this one, if you've forgotten) is doing its bit to keep a tiny, flickering flame alive.

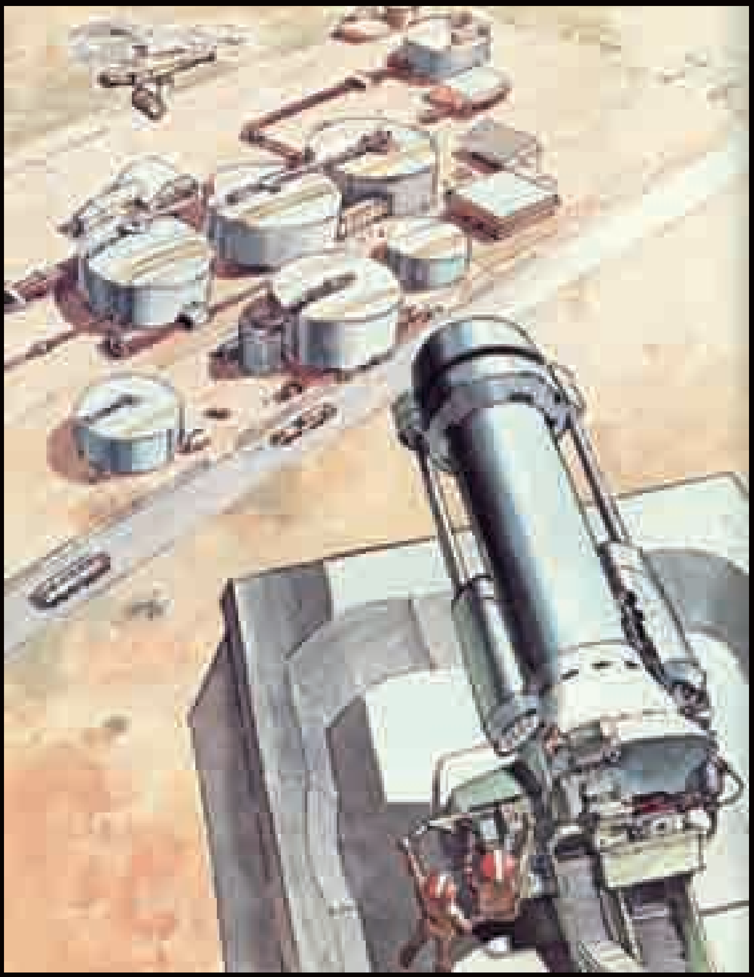


» A generic type-in Frogger clone with an old lady becomes an acute social commentary via illustration.

The Power of Suggestion (Part 1)

As videogames journey ever further into the Uncanny Valley (the name for the psychological phenomenon whereby the closer graphics get to photorealism, the more our brain concentrates on what's wrong with them, in order to prevent us from being fooled by fakes), custom artwork takes us on a trip to the opposite end of the spectrum, where the crudest of all possible visuals leaves space for our imaginations to fill in a scene far more evocative than any graphics card could depict. Take a look at this example from C&VG's June 1983 issue. It's the facing page from a type-in ZX81 program called 'Cannon Master'. The black-and-white in-game graphics showed you in command of a few arrows shooting minus-signs at asterisks in a big 'U' shape. But thanks to Jon Davis's illustration, when you actually played the game your mind saw you perched high up in the sky above a dusty, windswept desert canyon, manning huge gun emplacements charged with protecting your army's vital fuel dumps against a deadly hail of enemy rockets fired by an unseen enemy. The game graphics are just placeholders for the mental image, and your brain fills in the 'photorealism' for itself. (If you want to experience the sensation, I've personally typed in the entire game and saved it as a file for use with ZX81 emulators – you can download it from the forum of my website at www.worldofstuart.co.uk. Let nobody say we don't go the extra mile for our viewers here at Retro Gamer.)



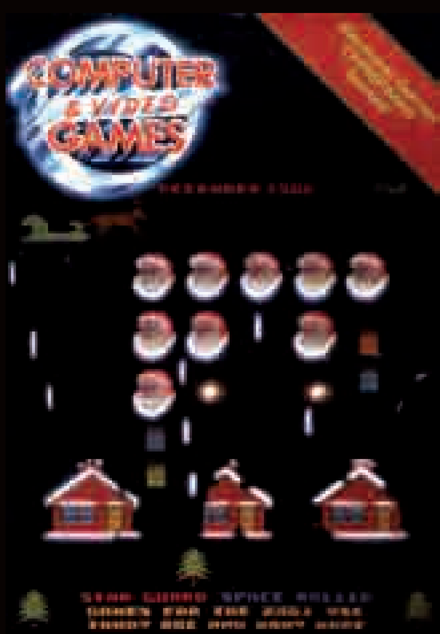


With a little imagination and artistry, the basic visuals of the type-in ZX81 program 'Cannon Master' are brought to life by illustrator Jon Davis.

Worth a Thousand Words

Front and centre

C&VG took particular pride in its front covers, and they encompassed a dizzying range of styles in the mag's first few years. (While illustrations would continue to be used inside the mag right through the Eighties, the cover would be increasingly given over to PR shots of commercial releases from around the middle of 1984. Until that point, the cover would often be devoted to one of the magazine's own type-in games rather than a retail title.) While a core team of artists – each with their own distinctive style – provided most of the artwork, occasionally the net would be cast rather wider to produce something even more esoteric.



John Thompson created this classic *Space Invaders* theme for the 1982 Christmas edition, which highlights one of the saddest losses of the modern era of mag publishing compared to old-style reproduction. When games are photographed rather than screen-dumped, you capture the scanlines of a TV screen, producing the distinctive 'pixelisation' that gives the image an evocative glow. It looks so nice that most emulators for the PC (which displays via scanline-free monitors) actually offer an option to simulate the scanlines to make the games look more authentic.



'The Bugs', drawn by Elphin Lloyd-Jones, were C&VG's mascot characters, and featured in their own full-page comic strip inside the magazine, as well as cropping up in all manner of random corners. This cover from issue 7 shows them in their full-colour glory for the first time.



Recently seen in tiny thumbnail form in another RG feature, this stunning April 1983 cover wasn't daubed by one of C&VG's own brushsmiths. In fact, it was painted around 175 years before the magazine even existed – it's a detail of 'The Battle of Trafalgar, as Seen from the Mizen Starboard Shrouds of the Victory', painted by the English Romantic artist J M W Turner to commemorate the famous naval victory. The original can currently be seen in the Tate Museum. Luckily, by the time C&VG came to pinch it, the copyright had expired…



This image by Stuart Briers for the August 1982 issue combines the spooky horror skeleton with an obvious homage to the famous Alfred Hitchcock thriller *Psycho*, in the shape of the trademark house on the hill. If you look really closely, you can just make out the malevolent shape of Mrs Bates in the window. (NB Mrs Bates may not be visible in this reduced reproduction.)





One of C&VG's stalwart artists was Dorian Cross, whose caricature art usually enlivened several pages of every issue. For issue 8, just in time for the start of the 1982 World Cup in Spain, he came up with this spectacular 3D sculpture in latex rubber, which predated the eerily similar puppets of *Spitting Image* by two years.

Apparently, this inventive cover by Linda Freeman made a serious dent in the sales of the October 1982 issue it adorned, as slow-witted readers confused the mag for an actual newspaper and failed to buy it. It's often credited in the publishing business as the reason people don't do newspaper-spoof covers any more.



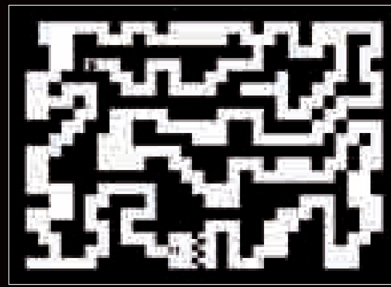


Right and far right: Returning to the nautical theme, the Tony Gibbons cover for issue 2 also showcases a trait shared only by a very few covers, but which demonstrates the incredible commitment to illustration that early C&VG had. Not only would they commission someone to produce a full-colour original painting for the cover, but they'd also get someone else to draw a reproduction of it to use on the 'Next Month' page. Now THAT'S dedication.

Worth a Thousand Words

The Power of Suggestion (Part 2)

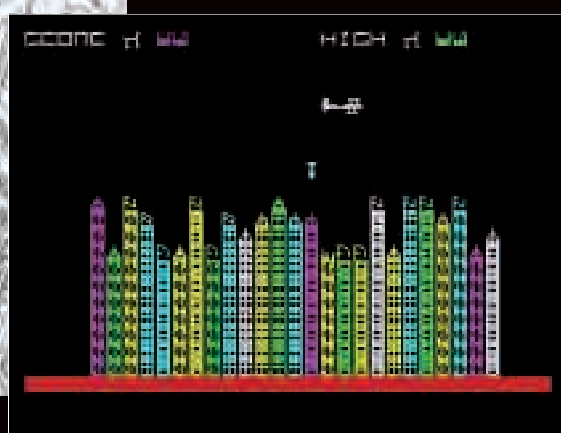
My personal favourite of C&VG's roster of artists is Dorian Cross. His bulbous, cartoony figures carry a very British air of the downtrodden unfortunate, in the tradition of Tony Hancock, *Fawlty Towers*, *Steptoe And Son* or (for our younger readers) Mr Bean. These three images manage to load atmosphere and pathos into three of the most basic staple games of the magazine-type-in genre.



This ostensibly racing-themed ZX81 game is in fact nothing more than a variant of those electronic toys where you have to guide a metal hoop along a wire without touching it. But illustrated by Cross it's suddenly imbued with a dramatic backstory, where the hapless driver finds himself at the wheel of an out-of-control race car which appears to have left the track and is mowing down terrified spectators. This, you realise, is the human tragedy that awaits if you can't keep your car on the course.







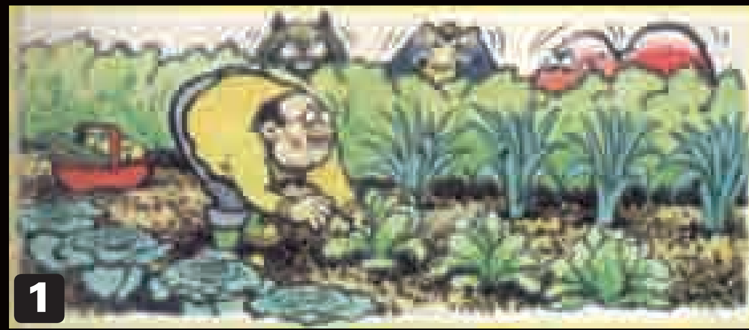
This is my absolute favourite, though. The 'City Bomber' game was an ever-present fixture throughout the entire era of the type-in listing (though it was also released commercially – we've pictured Jeff Minter's version). In it, you pilot a bomber aircraft which is inexorably spiralling out of the sky, and can only survive by literally bombing flat the city beneath it to provide a landing strip. Given this timeworn concept to illustrate, Cross hit upon with the genius of representing it from the previously unconsidered viewpoint of the unfortunate inhabitants of the skyscrapers below, gazing up in bemused horror at the catastrophe about to befall them. The detail of the puddle of water trailing from the tiny window-box to the edge of the building is heartbreaking, and not until the release of *The Getaway* on the PS2 20-odd years later would gamers be forced to confront the dubious morality of their actions in such a way.

How on earth do you make a *Yahtzee* game seem interesting when there's nothing more exciting in it than a handful of dice? Well, you could portray it as being played by a scurvy gang of scowling merchant seaman on a dockside. Lose this game and shudder at the all-too-easily-imagined thought of what might befall you if you can't pay up on your wager.

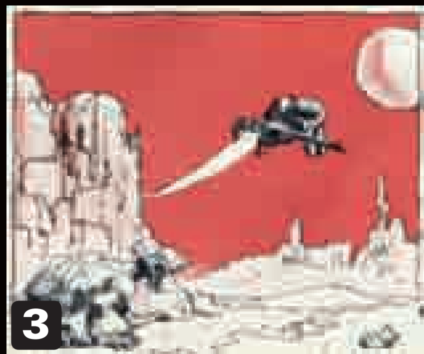


I'll name that game in one (Round 1)

C&VG was the only magazine in the UK that gave any kind of coverage to arcade gaming, in the form of its monthly two-page column Arcade Action. Arcade owners didn't tend to want photographers getting in the way of their coin-slots for hours at a time, so Arcade Action was almost solely illustrated by custom artwork. Can you identify these classic coin-op games from the C&VG artists' impressions of them? And just to make it harder, we've thrown in a ringer – one of the images is of a home micro game, not an arcade one. (Answers at the bottom of the page.)


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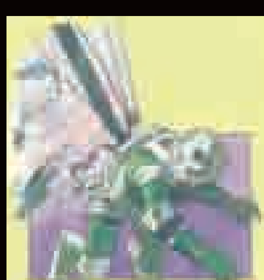

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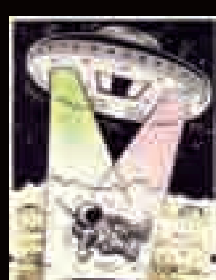

10

1. Dig Dug. **2.** Moon Cresta. **3.** Jet Pac. **4.** Robotron. **5.** Amidar. **6.** Congo Bongo. **7.** Elevator Action. **8.** Tron. **9.** Time Pilot. **10.** Zaxxon.

I'll name that game in one (Round 2)

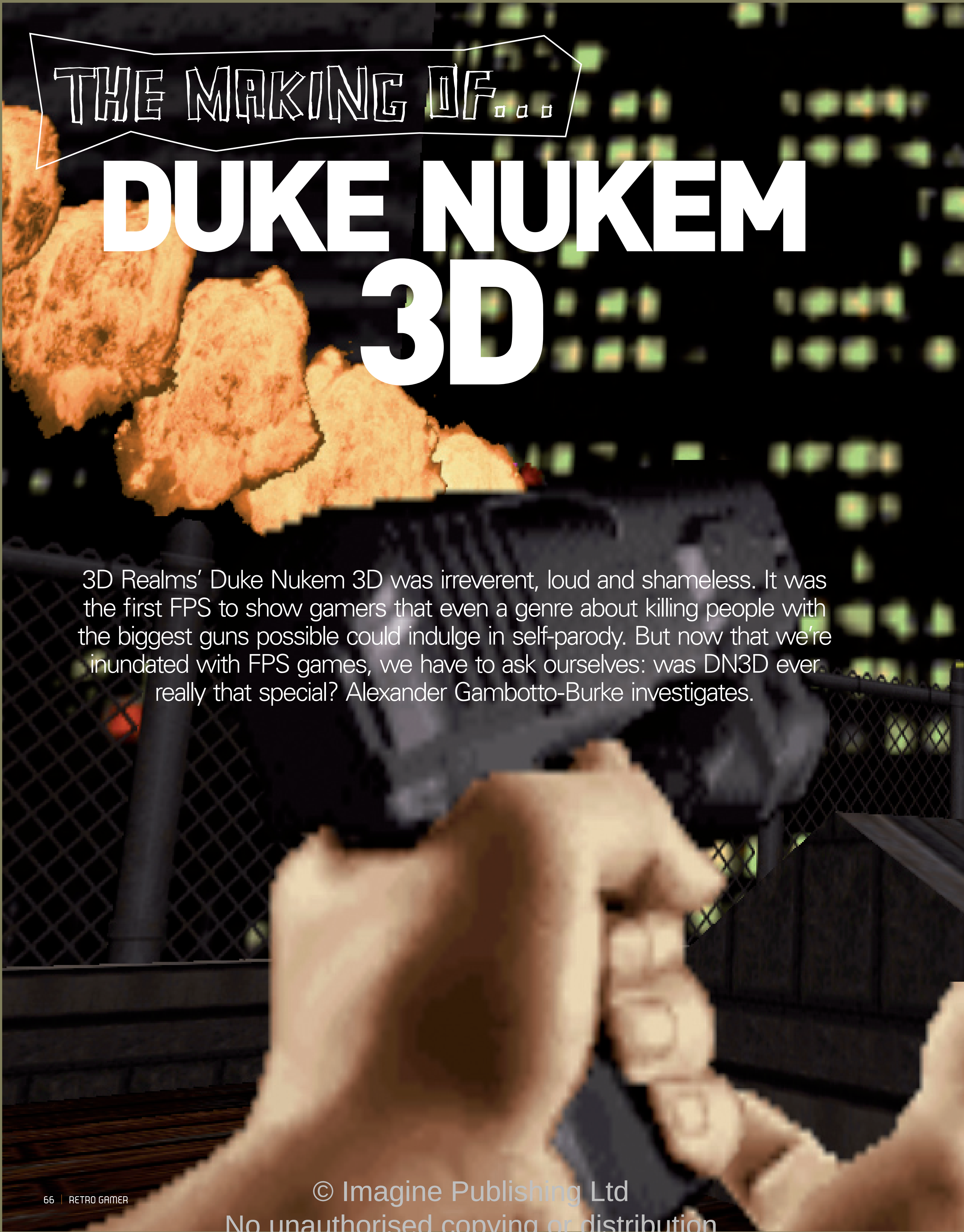
When a game was popular and therefore mentioned in several issues of the magazine, C&VG would often hand the job of illustrating it to different artists each time. Which well-known space blaster is the subject of these very different interpretations?







The game is Defender!



THE MAKING OF...

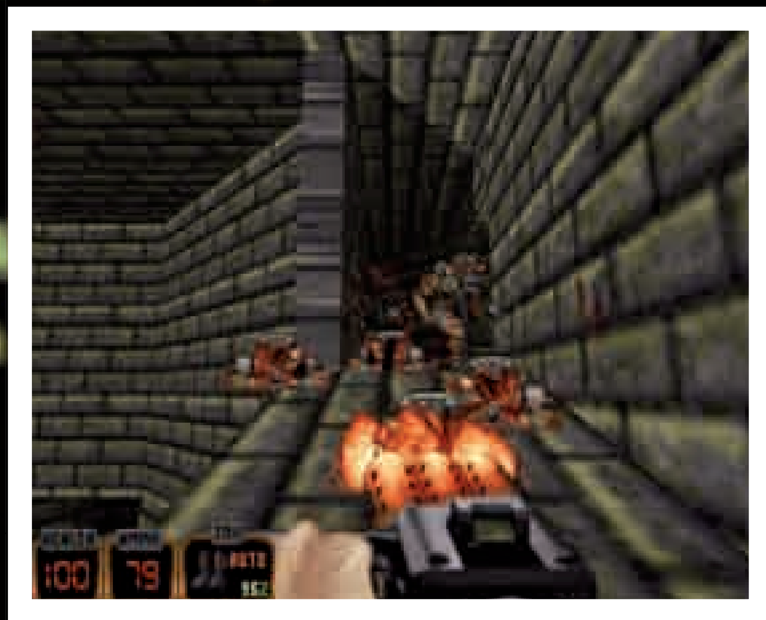
DUKE NUKEM 3D

3D Realms' Duke Nukem 3D was irreverent, loud and shameless. It was the first FPS to show gamers that even a genre about killing people with the biggest guns possible could indulge in self-parody. But now that we're inundated with FPS games, we have to ask ourselves: was DN3D ever really that special? Alexander Gambotto-Burke investigates.

If you're like most PC gamers, you've been waiting for *Duke Nukem Forever* for ten years now. Of course, a healthy diet of ever-prettier murder simulators over the past decade may have clouded your memories of the original FPS, *Duke Nukem 3D*. Now that *Half-Life*, its sequel, *Deus Ex*, *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* have all reshaped the genre in myriad ways, and *DNF* is truly living up to its title, we may not remember what was so special about *Duke Nukem 3D*. After all, its graphics were sprite-based – a true mark of old age in this genre – and its plot and humour unashamedly puerile. In a time when we're utterly drowning in FPS titles, what could *DN3D* possibly be worth?

George Broussard, the game's executive producer, considers this question. "I think," he muses, "it had humour, interactivity and a sense of character. You weren't just a faceless marine kicking ass. You had personality."

And what a personality. No other videogame character has ever been so memorable. Duke's terse, Eastwood-does-Vegas growls ("Shake 'em, baby!", "Your face, your ass… what's the difference?", "Hail to the king") have echoed through every shooter since, most notably when you've ploughed through another 500 Nazis, only to hear your avatar say… absolutely nothing. Some would argue that this is for a good reason – they'd say that having player characters spurt out one-liners spoils immersion – but Broussard disagrees. "A lot of people think it's less distracting or better to play as a faceless, speechless avatar," he concedes, "but we believe strongly in playing as strong characters in a game. It's really personal preference, and you can have a great game either way, but we do believe strongly that people play games to get away from reality, and to have fun and play as strong characters is part of that."



» Mowing down alien scujm has never been more satisfying.

Duke was strong in both senses of the word. With huge, rippling muscles and a platinum-blond crew cut, the guy was lucky he didn't become a matinee gay icon. More than this, though, his infectiously chauvinistic charm shone through every minute of the game, leading *DN3D* and Duke himself to be irrevocably bound; you can't talk about one without the other.

It's odd that Duke had this effect on the game, as his origins weren't anything spectacular. "Duke came from nothing special," Broussard reveals. "It was just a character developed for the first *Duke Nukem* game [a platformer released in 1991]. The name rhymed and nuking things sounded cool. That's as deep as character design got in those days."

Similarly, everything in *DN3D* fell together almost at the last minute. "It certainly evolved over time," he notes, "but a lot of things, like Duke talking, the interactivity, the strippers and pop culture references, were added in the last four to five months of development. We really just wanted to make something that would stand out a little from most other FPS games of the time. We wanted to make something that, as adults, we would enjoy playing. The philosophy was to make a game that was politically incorrect but still in the context of the real world, and not too gratuitous. We also wanted to play up Duke's ego and character, as nobody had really done that in an FPS game to date. The last thing we wanted

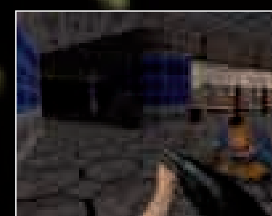


» Witness the awesome destruction of the Duke's rocket launcher.

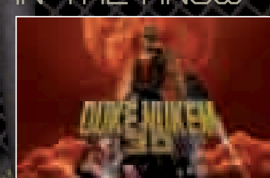
"WE KNEW WE'D GET SOME HEAT FOR IT, BUT WE DIDN'T CARE… IT WAS TIME FOR GAMES TO GROW UP A LITTLE BIT." GEORGE BROUSSARD

DUKE MOD'EM

Recently, a team of Duke enthusiasts put together a little something called the Duke Nukem 3D High Resolution Pack. What does it do, you ask? Well, imagine playing ol' *DN3D*, but with proper 3D models instead of sprites, and spiffy high-res textures! What's more, you can forget compatibility troubles, as JonoF's jfduke3d port of 3D Realms' hit is super-smooth. For the whole package, head off to http://www.planetduke.com/hrp/index.htm



IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** APOGEE SOFTWARE
- » **DEVELOPER:** 3D REALMS
- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON-SHOOTER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



THE MAKING OF...
DUKE NUKEM 3D

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DUKE NUKEM
SYSTEMS: PC
YEAR: 1991

RISE OF THE TRIAD
SYSTEMS: PC
YEAR: 1995

SHADOW WARRIOR
SYSTEMS: PC, MAC
YEAR: 1997



TOP SECRETS

Long the domain of bored programmers and frustrated artists, Easter eggs in games didn't tend to attract much attention back in 1996. That all changed with *Duke Nukem 3D*. In fact, one could easily argue that the recent Hot Coffee scandal has its roots in 3D Realms' controversial, semi-hidden joke. Ironically enough, *Duke 3D*'s most inflammatory Easter egg had nothing to do with sex; it was a jovial stab at rivals id Software and their FPS juggernaut, *Doom*. When a player walks up to what looks very much like the corpse of the *Doom* marine, Duke remarks, "That's one doomed space marine." id responded by trying to get a court injunction to remove the apparently libellous content. They were unsuccessful – clear evidence that not even the most powerful FPS developer in the world can mess with the Duke.





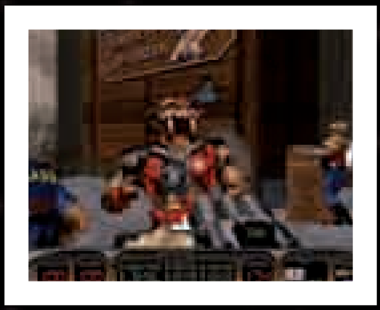
» A very early sneak preview of the new Transformers movie...

was lots of interactivity and to reward players for shooting or using things. We wanted everything to have a reaction."

Everything did. If there's one thing you can say about levels in *DN3D*, it's that they had countless numbers of inconsequential objects to play with, be it clocks, toilets, microphones, pool tables or, occasionally, strippers. Levels weren't just geometric blocks in which you blasted baddies; they were highly reactive 'mini-worlds' where you could, theoretically, spend quite some time exploring the secrets thereof. Did everyone do this when they played it? No. But it's still amazing that this kind of depth was present in a shooter of *Duke Nukem 3D*'s vintage.

Broussard thinks this was one of the game's most important ingredients. "What do people remember about the game today?" he asks. "Do they remember shooting the 100th Pig Cop or the pool table? I think that stuff added a lot and was one of the core reasons *DN3D* was a success. The interactivity added depth to the game. We wanted to make a world that was fun to stop and play around with for a few minutes. It's nice to have other things to do besides simply shooting bad guys."

Part of this interactivity was *DN3D*'s frequent Easter eggs, many of which were savvy pop-culture references. (Some have even suggested that *DN3D*'s cover is a parody of *Ultimate Doom*'s box-art.) "We were big fans of Eighties action hero movies," Broussard explains, "and towards the end of *DN3D*'s development, once most of the game was there, we took the opportunity to lace it with lots of references. We did this because we thought it would be fun for people to play the game and see things like the *Doom*-ed Space Marine, or an OJ Simpson reference, or movie lines, or whatever. We just wanted these cool little references to other media so that when people played the game, they got some of the inside jokes in addition to just playing. It gave people something to talk about with their friends."



» A very brutal shot from the *Atomic Edition*.

It's *DN3D*'s jokes that really make it stand out, according to Broussard. "Most shooters now are all WWII games, or totally serious, or without a strong lead character," he continues. "I love the interactivity in *Half-Life 2*, and I liked *Riddick* a lot. But the most common thing I hear in email from fans is that they miss Duke for his humour, so I suppose that's a big thing we better focus on in the future. Maybe too many games take themselves too seriously. Almost any action movie will have humour in it as a contrast. Even in serious sci-fi movies like *Terminator* or *Aliens*, you have a lot of humour to offset the sombre tone of the movie. Humour is very underutilised in shooters today."

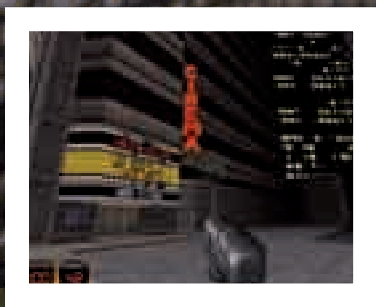
That said, he refuses to think of *DN3D* as a 'humour' game. "We certainly didn't intend it that way, and we didn't set out to spoof anything. Years later, people tell us that they saw *DN3D* as a comedy game. We never intended that at all. Duke never tried to be funny, but we thought some of the things he said were funny. We did intend to have all the pop culture references in the game, though."

Despite Broussard's views on the situation, it's indubitable that even some of *DN3D*'s weapons were, well, on



» He may be big and nasty, but a couple of pipe bombs to the face will sort him out.

" 'DUKE NUKEM' RHYMED AND NUKING THINGS SOUNDED COOL. THAT'S AS DEEP AS CHARACTER DESIGN GOT IN THOSE DAYS." GEORGE BROUSSARD



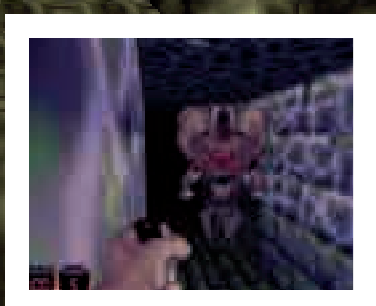
» I wonder if it's showing anything good?

the humorous side – shrink rays and freeze guns don't exactly suggest total earnestness. "When we were designing the weapons," he says, "we did the basic pistol, shotgun, machine gun and rocket launcher. They seemed to be the basis of FPS weapons. Then we just started to play with new ideas for guns that were just fun. I can't think of another word to describe it. It's just fundamentally fun to shrink a guy and step on him, or freeze him then shatter him. It's fun to place a trip mine in deathmatch and hide around a corner and watch. In fact, most of those weapons will return in *Duke Nukem Forever*, simply because they haven't been used a lot in other games, and they are still very fun, as well as being part of *DN3D*'s legacy and uniqueness."

Mind you, even if Broussard doesn't get it when fans call *DN3D* a comedy game, they could have just as easily called it a 'controversy' game, as that's certainly something it attracted. Broussard evenly considers the negative feedback. "Sure. We knew we'd get some heat for it, but we didn't care. We were all adult game players and were tired of cute cartoony games. It was time for games to grow up a little bit, just as the game players had. I think the strippers and adult bookstore were less than one percent of the game. But we intentionally placed them very early in the game so they would be seen. It was amusing to watch how low-resolution boobies really shocked a lot of people. We have an entire wall of framed editorial pieces from newspapers and game magazines called our Wall of Shame. We're very proud of them. It's interesting to watch the same thing happen today with *GTA*. Nothing has changed, and I doubt it ever will. People in general aren't really willing to accept games as an adult entertainment form. Maybe after another generation of people grow up."

Whether paying a stripper to bare her breasts should be considered 'adult' is debatable, and whether it's right to support a line of work that usually targets victims of abuse and dopes them with drugs is also up for question, but Broussard's not wrong when he says that stuff wasn't actually a big part of the game. In fact, it's a shame that a lot of people will remember *DN3D* for its most objectionable content, simply because it wasn't meant to be taken too seriously. Much like the Duke himself. "I wouldn't say Duke is immoral at all. I'd wager that the vast majority of men in the world have been to a strip club, or drunk some alcohol at some point. Duke is just a man's man, and we sort of had John Wayne and Clint Eastwood in mind when we were developing his character. He's politically incorrect and doesn't take any shit. He's got a big ego that's well deserved, but he also has a sense of justice and what's right and wrong. He'll go about solving things in his own way. He doesn't take orders. I think he's just a fun character to play for a little while."

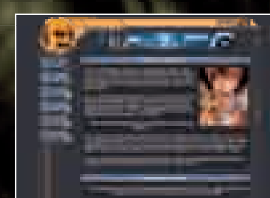
Much more than a little while, actually. For whilst a lot of us have let *DN3D* become nostalgia, there are still communities out there that are playing, modding and, well, loving the game. And we'd wager that, despite the antediluvian graphics, muddy sound effects and ideological cheese, you'd still enjoy it if you booted it up today. As an example of how a modern shooter can be more than just *Wolfenstein 3D* with pixel shaders, it's unbeatable. Who knows? Maybe ten years from now, when several new *Duke Nukem Forever* screenshots start to surface, we'll still be playing 3D Realms' timeless shooter.



» You're one ugly muther fu… [ED - none of that please]

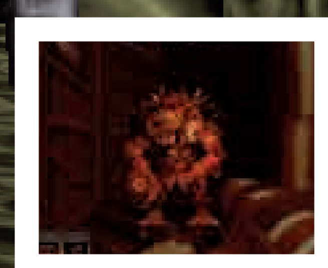
WAIT FOREVER?

Unless you've been stuck on a desert island with Tom Hanks for the past decade, you'll know *Duke 3D*'s true sequel has never been released. *Duke Nukem Forever* reaches its tenth year in development this year; something tells us the party celebrating its continued absence despite countless promised release dates won't be very large. Curiously, *DNF*'s infamy seems to have eclipsed the acclaim *DN3D* still receives – a definite first, especially for a game that doesn't actually exist in complete form just yet. There have been stirrings at 3D Realms suggesting an official announcement may be imminent but, as always, we'll believe it when we see it.

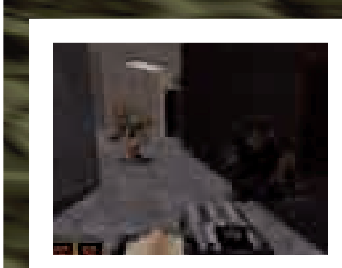




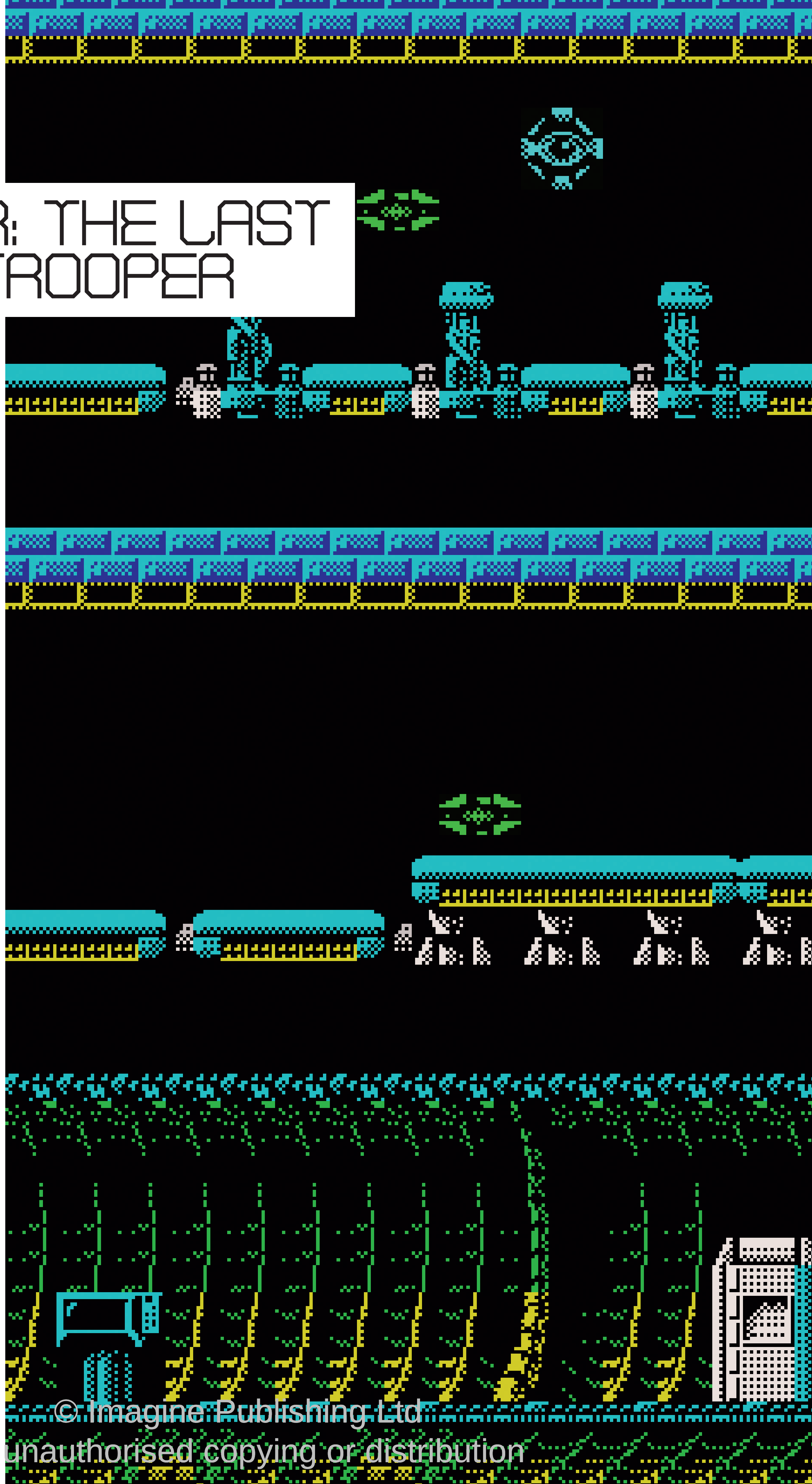
» The bigger they are the harder they fall… We hope.



» No it's not the same screenshot as the one on the left, this one's a lot redder.

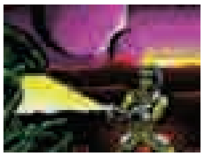


» It's quiet for the moment but just wait till all the killing starts…

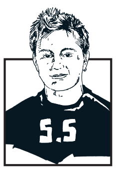


TRANTOR: THE LAST STORM TROOPER

IS THAT YOU, FERGUS?



- » **PUBLISHER:** PROBE SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ACTION
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ZX SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £1



HISTORY

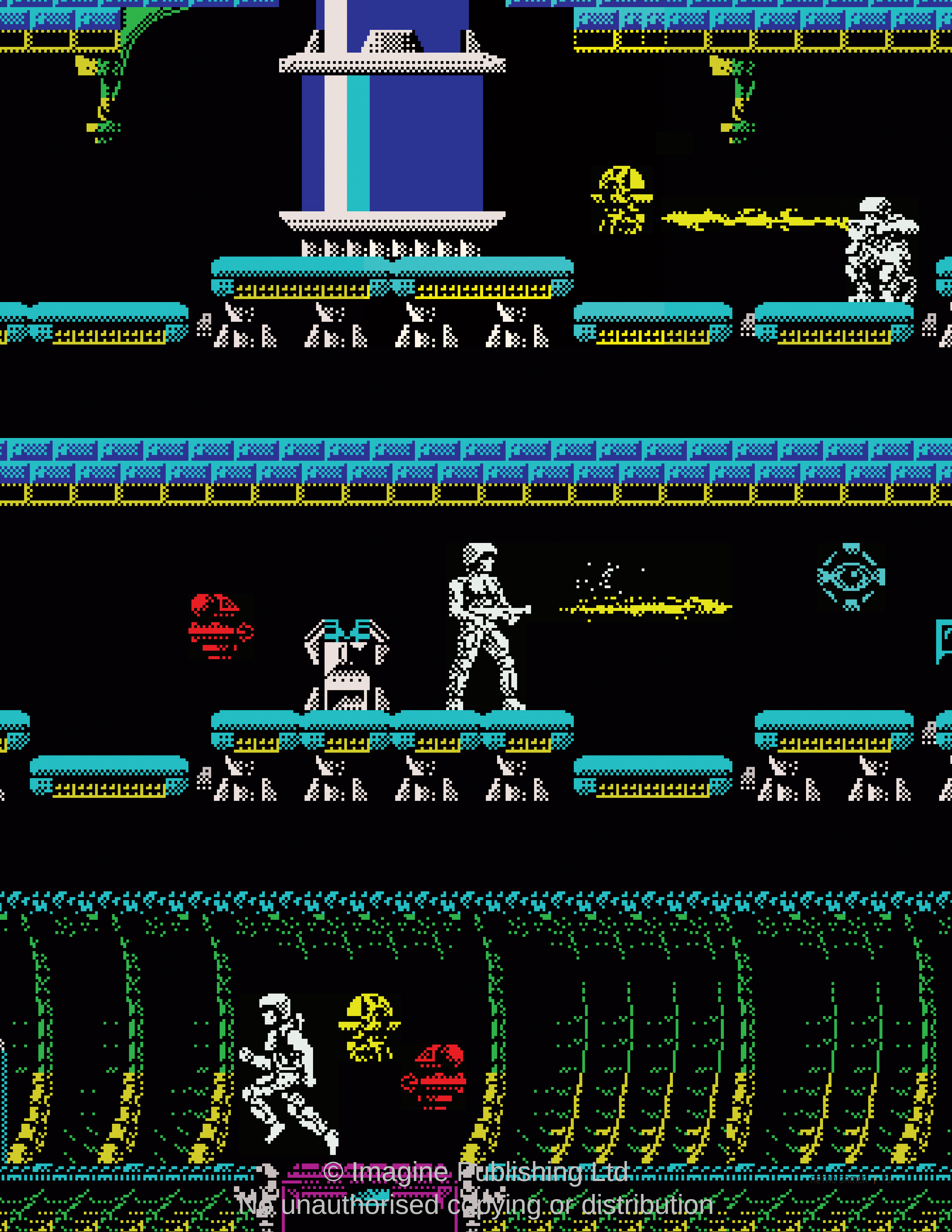
The title that launched US Gold's brand-new Go! publishing label Smash-ed and Mega Game-d its way to the top of the 1987 charts quicker than you can blow up a space marine's ship. Over ten months in the making at Probe Software, this handsome run-and-gun, shoot-'em-up platformer still looks as good today as it did during Thatcher's reign of terror.

As *Trantor* went from preview to full-price centre shelf to budget re-re-release, the story varied considerably as to why Trantor was actually running around shooting stuff and activating terminals. What with that massive big screenshot taking up all the room on the right, space is too short to cover the different explanations laid out across a sea of inlay cards (could someone please start this month's forum argument about two-page screenshots, please?) when in truth none of them was remotely necessary.

The brief, yet stylised, opening cut-scene showing Trantor being thrown to the ground as his spaceship exploded in a cloud of radioactive vapour was all that was needed to set the tension for the forthcoming excitement. Once inside the multi-level lab, jaws hit floors as the enormous, beautifully animated main character set off at a sprint with flame-thrower on full thrape. Chasing between recharge consoles while trying to decipher the lab's computer codes and escape via a matter transporter provided the kind of fast, hyper-escapist action gameplay the Speccy so rarely achieved.

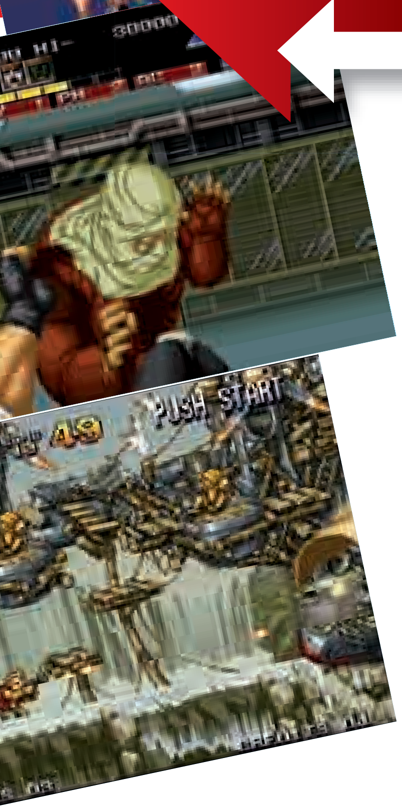
True, there was a fair amount of colour clash and game tactics soon amounted to "CHAAAAARGE!!!", but watching the sheer size and speed of the remarkable graphics made humble Speccy owners feel like a Mega Drive had slipped through a quantum singularity from the future and landed in their tape drive.

That gameplay might seem shallow today, but if you remember how amazing it was to see Tranny legging it around those Giger-esque corridors, you'll know why he's being celebrated here. If only he'd been the Penultimate Storm Trooper, we might have had a 16-bit sequel…





DEVELOPER LOOKBACK



SNK (PART TWO)

THROUGHOUT THE EIGHTIES WE WITNESSED SNK EMERGE FROM MODEST ORIGINS ONTO THE WORLD STAGE. IT WOULD BE THE NINETIES, HOWEVER, THAT WOULD SEE KAWASAKI'S SNK BECOME THE EMBODIMENT OF HIS DREAMS, AND SUBSEQUENT NIGHTMARE. MIKE TOOLEY CONTINUES HIS HISTORIC ODYSSEY.

Unlike many software companies of the late Eighties and early Nineties, SNK found itself on a steady financial footing. Its business was complex and its games solid, bolstered by a clever distribution network that prolonged each game's shelf life.

Eikichi Kawasaki and Paul Jacobs surveyed the Nineties as frontiersmen. Looking behind them they could see a short but rich heritage with which to garner confidence, while around them much of the gaming industry was laid waste, and in front an uncharted decade, a decade with no boundaries.

Kawasaki explains it as a turning point where SNK could finally lay to rest the ghost of Eighties anonymity. "We believe our business watershed was 1990 when we established and released the NEO-GEO MVS [Multi Video System]. To have our own hardware we could succeed in the arcade business using this system and we could establish our SNK brand worldwide". Loved by arcade owners for their price and changeability, the MVS units also featured a control system which was standard across many cabinets, allowing gamers to build a familiarity with the interface that they could previously only get at home. Coupled with the large colourful sprites on display, SNK was onto a winner the world over.

The name NEO-GEO came from the mindset inside SNK Japan at the time, as Kawasaki explains. "NEO-GEO means 'New Frontier' in Latin. When we developed this system, we invited some suggestions internally and one of our development staff put forward the name 'NEO-GEO'. We're trying to establish our new system in the arcade business field and all our management agreed that the name was perfect." MVS would secure SNK's immediate arcade future and, with companies like Taito and Alpha Denshi jumping on board, would house titles of a pedigree without peer.



The home market was, at that time, going through a major transition. Where only a few years earlier the industry had witnessed home micros replace consoles as the machines of choice, Sega, Nintendo and Hudson had reversed this trend. The NES was huge the world over, and the PC engine delivered massive sales to the Japanese and US market, but it was Sega who really caught Kawasaki's attention. Sega had just released the Genesis (aka Mega Drive), itself a revolution in a technology form. However, it wasn't the machine but Sega's ideal that inspired Kawasaki. Where SNK had a solid arcade performance through the Eighties, Sega dominated; nobody at that time was even close. And when Sega said that the Genesis was to bring the arcade experience home to gamers, Kawasaki understood why more than most. Frustrated at seeing SNK titles being watered down for the home market, Kawasaki knew that if he could get the MVS into homes he would be onto a sure winner.

SNK Japan set their R&D lab to work on creating the NEO-GEO home console. Originally released for use in hospitality venues such as hotels or as a rental console, the NEO-GEO Advanced Entertainment System quickly garnered a following and was soon released to mainstream Japan. Initially targeted at adult gamers with large disposable incomes, the AES was possibly the most loaded console ever to be launched, even by today's standards. No compromises were made in the transition from the MVS at all. The CPU sound and graphics easily outperformed the Genesis and SNES; it wasn't until the PlayStation that a more powerful machine would come along.

The AES came with two whopping controllers, each 30cm by 20cm. Weighing in at just under 2kg, it was also the first console to have a memory card and slot built in. It epitomised early Nineties refinement with Eighties brash. Each game would proclaim its ROM size on the box and cartridge, and while Nintendo and Sega games cartridges were just reaching 16 megabits, AES cartridges frequently reached over 100 megabits, earning the 100-mega shock logo its relevance. The cartridges were as big as hardback books, while the AES had 'MAX 330 MEGA PRO-GEAR SPEC' emblazoned across its front. Owning the AES was like owning a US stock car, a machine sprayed with sound bites that occluded the mighty grunt hidden beneath.

For all its promise, getting the AES to multiple markets proved to be an uphill struggle. Paul Jacobs fought furiously with SNK Japan to get a US release for AES; this battle would eventually become the impetus for his departure. SNK Japan was reticent about releasing AES to mass market for two main reasons, the first being the prohibitive manufacturing costs if the machine didn't find an audience. Secondly, post Black Wednesday, the US and European economies were still in recession. All parties agreed that there should be no compromises with the hardware, effectively putting AES beyond the reach of all but a few consumers in the West. Eventually SNK Japan succumbed to Jacobs, as he sold them on a cautious launch strategy that would see a limited number of machines made and sold through the US market before production would start on more machines.

A second US arm of SNK was created as SNK Home Entertainment Inc, the first time SNK had opened a company without a proven sales base. Jacobs appointed John Barone to run operations. Barone didn't have the same pedigree as Jacobs or Kawasaki, but was viewed as being easier to manage. A company man, Barone would always put SNK first. Kent Russell was appointed VP of marketing and would run all of SNK America's marketing operations, developing some of the most distinctive campaigns that videogaming had ever seen. Russell believed that gamers weren't kids any

THE GAME LORD SPEAKETH

One of Kent Russell's innovations at SNK was to introduce game counsellors to the US. A step up from the helplines that Nintendo had in place, these guys were masters of the games that they advised on, and were keen to recommend other games for SNK systems while capturing feedback from the gamers that would be sent to the development teams. The most notable of these would be Chad Okada. Initially employed as a game councillor, Russell soon spotted his potential and within a couple of years of joining SNK, Chad would write the box art for repackaged US games. Under the guise of The Game Lord, Chad would appear at game shows the world over, demonstrating the latest SNK games and meeting show attendees.

With regular editorials appearing in the gaming press Chad, in his persona as The Game Lord, soon became a celebrity on the SNK scene. While other figures from that golden period in the history of SNK would move onto senior roles with other companies, Chad's departure took him to Sony where he developed *Cardinal Sin* for the PlayStation, and was heavily involved in the *Twisted Metal 4* development. Eventually Sony created a role specifically for Chad, where he was to tailor SNK PlayStation games to the US market, correcting the notoriously bad grammar and adding features such as a level select.



» The massive AES cart and packaging.



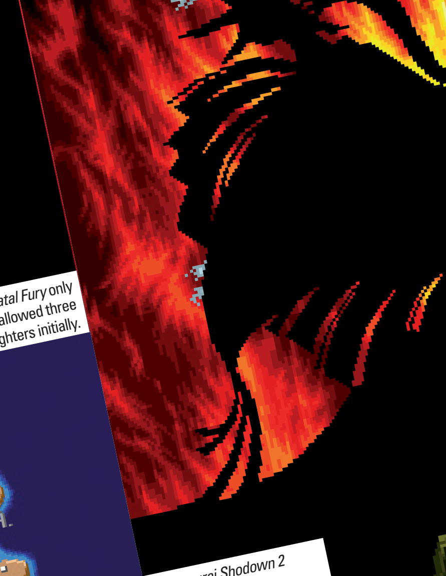
» The briliant *Last Blade* is superb.



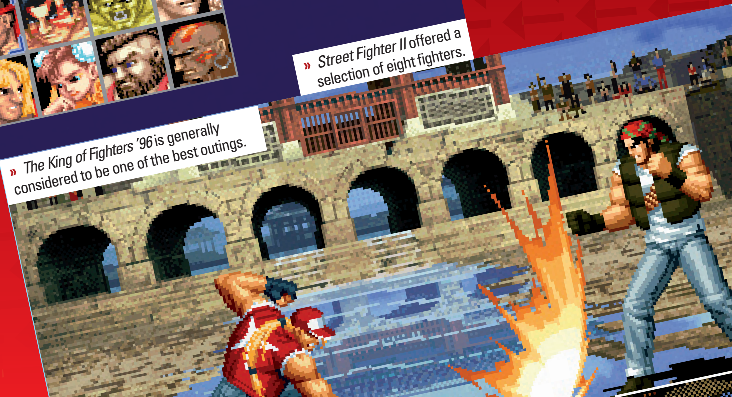
» *Fatal Fury* only allowed three fighters initially.



» *Street Fighter II* offered a selection of eight fighters.



» *Samurai Shodown 2* demonstrated the capabilites of MVS and AES.



» *The King of Fighters '96* is generally considered to be one of the best outings.

AGGRESSORS OF DARK KOMBAT

With the arcade and home divisions, plus a raft of great games in tow, it must have been difficult to see where a company as robust as SNK was in the early Nineties could actually fail. The answer, however, can be seen in many places. Fundamentally Sega and Namco had changed the arcades with their 3D wizardry. While *Street Fighter II* provided a final hurrah for 2D games, 3D was the new black and SNK couldn't offer the hardware or software to facilitate this need. On the home front SNK suffered dearly for allowing substandard ports of its games to be released on the Genesis and SNES. It didn't worry about the quality of these conversions as it illustrated the power of AES over the rival consoles. Then there was Capcom, who developed a home entertainment arm that would bring the arcade games home, in many cases improving the source material. In 1996 Capcom would amaze the world with *Resident Evil*, while SNK would buy and market *Metal Slug* for the arcades and later fail to match demand for the game on AES. It would be almost ten years before *Metal Slug* would find its way to the home market proper. Such was SNK's desire to become the master of the 2D fighting game, it hadn't noticed that a genre that started in a crowded marketplace with a massive fan base had subsided, developers had left and all but the most hardcore fighting enthusiast were at home playing on their PlayStations or Saturns.

more, and that if he could unify the brand to the product he could take SNK forward to the next level. Nowhere was this more evident than when Russell would have the packaging changed on all the US consoles and games to tie in with media advertising. The success of this meant that the most successful campaign's main icon of a rabid bulldog would become the SNK seal of quality.

Finally launched in the US in 1991 for $599 with two controllers and a choice of *Baseball Stars* or *Nam 75*, the NEO-GEO quickly garnered a small user base and it wasn't long before Jacobs realised that with games retailing at over $200 each, profits would be easier to find through software not hardware. A $200 AES price drop ensued, backed by one of the most aggressive marketing campaigns the industry had ever seen, NEO-GEO had arrived and fired a shot across the bows of just about everybody in the games industry.

The weenie adverts (as they are now known) featured heavily across the multiformat magazines in the US. They featured a fully laden hot dog, asking gamers if they would rather play on a weenie system such as the Genesis or Turbo Grafx or the real-deal AES, a fully loaded arcade machine. This and subsequent ad campaigns held nothing back. AES was so powerful compared to its rivals that Russell didn't care where or how publicly they were compared. Furthermore, they didn't imply anything; SNK just came right out and said it. This aggression would culminate in the Bigger, Badder, Better campaign; gaming press and TV based, it featured a rabid pit bull and three words: 'Bigger, Badder, Better'. This captured perfectly SNK's belief in its system, and had the mass effect of making people feel that their own home system was inferior – which, of course, it was.

Gamers wanted the NEO-GEO desperately, but for many it was just a wild ambition. Despite price drops in the hardware, the price of games remained prohibitive. At one point in 1992 a NEO-GEO game in the US would cost an average week's wage. The AES was going to be a slow burn.

In April that same year Capcom would release a game that not only secured their future for the Nineties but began a race with SNK that would dominate gaming in the same way that the Soviet and US space race dominated the Cold War, creating new technologies as a by-product. Few companies would avoid the ground swell rising around the two Osaka powerhouses as they fought over a new games genre.

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior became an instant smash the world over. Not since *Space Invaders* had a single arcade game garnered so much attention. It had bucked the trend and brought the gamers flocking back to the arcades Fortunately for Kawasaki, after the success of *Street Smart* (1989), SNK Japan was already hard at work on a one-on-one fighting game. Some seven months after *Street Fighter II*, *Fatal Fury: The King Of The Fighters* was released. Although visually stronger than the Capcom offering, the similarities couldn't be missed. However, the addition of a second plane in the game field helped *Fatal Fury* to stand apart. This slightly more technical approach to combat met with a riotous reception from gamers, and the first of the *Street Fighter* versus *Fatal Fury* arguments was born. Gamers were divided as to which was best and, with both titles being technically accomplished, it all came down to personal preference.

Jacobs, reliably informed by his network of industry contacts, reported to Kawasaki that *Street Fighter II* was due for a SNES release in late 1992, which provided SNK with an opportunity. There was to be an 18-month delay before *Street Fighter II* would be released as a home version, while SNK already had *Fatal Fury* available on MVS; it would just need repackaging for its AES release.





» The 'weenie' advert compared the powerful NEO-GEO with its puny rivals.



» An advert for the NEO-GEO arcade machine which extolled its main virtue of flexibility.





» Compare this screen to the *Fatal Fury* one above. *Fatal Fury* was aesthetically superior to *Street Fighter II*.



» This campaign would result in the dog being adopted as the SNK seal of quality.

Shipping in late 1991, *Fatal Fury* would become the AES's first killer app. Retailing at $250 it would give AES owners a game that they just couldn't play anywhere else. Nothing even similar existed on other formats, and the home version was absolutely arcade perfect. Backed by a minor advertising campaign in the vein of the weenie ads, SNK compared the full-blown AES *Fatal Fury* with the watered down *Street Fighter II* conversion that was coming to the SNES. Unsurprisingly, sales of the NEO-GEO increased in line with expectation, shifting over 50,000 units in the US during the first 12 months of *Fatal Fury*'s release.

Viewing this success as vindication for his battle with SNK Japan and, wanting to avoid a repeat of the Universal situation that had brought him to SNK, Paul Jacobs left for the ailing Data East. John Barone stepped up to take responsibility for both SNK America operations, appointing Marty Kitazawa to liaise directly with Japan, hoping to improve relations with the East and avoid some of the conflict that Jacobs had felt. Barone lacked the verve and network of Jacobs, but had a passion for SNK and business. Possibly Barone's most notable contribution was to increase the finance budgets for Kent Russell, who subsequently developed a network of game counsellors – put in place to help gamers with game strategies and to provide tips and tricks. It was one of these very counsellors who would become the public face of SNK in the US and Europe: The Game Lord. Advertorials were run across all the major multiformat magazines, describing AES games and acting as a teaser for new releases, all penned by The Game Lord. Phone lines were set up to help stranded gamers, and information from players would be gathered to aid the design of future games.

By 1992 SNK had established itself as a hardware and software provider for both the home and arcade markets. Precariously balanced, SNK was at the top of a very steep precipice. If only it could launch a flare so that the gamers would notice it en masse. For all the quality on display, *Fatal Fury* was overshadowed by *Street Fighter II* in the gaming press and sales charts. When Capcom announced a sequel for *Street Fighter II* was to launch in 1992, SNK responded with a new game altogether.

Art Of Fighting was released in 1992 and divided gamers immediately. Featuring a revolutionary scaling technique that would zoom in on characters and backdrops, it disappointed many gamers. And with only a meagre arcade performance behind it, Kawasaki turned SNK's attention elsewhere.

Unwilling to give even an inch in the fierce beat-'em-up battle with Capcom, Kawasaki instructed the SNK subsidiary Takara to develop *Fatal Fury* for the home markets. While in Japan, Kawasaki commissioned *Fatal Fury 2* – this time with a simultaneous AES release in mind, for the now lucrative fighting game market.

Later in 1992 SNK would find the game that would bring it the attention it so needed. It would turn out to be not only one of its biggest franchises but also one of its most

FOR ALL THE QUALITY ON DISPLAY, FATAL FURY WAS OVERSHADOWED BY STREET FIGHTER II IN THE GAMING PRESS AND SALES CHARTS

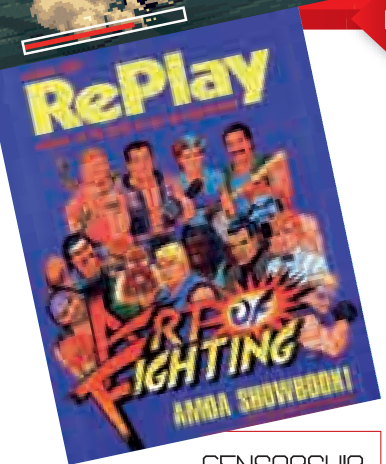


» The Super Spy would reveal the system's limits.

» The Samurai Shodown series has continued on various formats.

» Since its inception, King Of The Fighters has always been SNK's most lucrative asset.

» Garou: Mark of the Wolves is quite simply one of the greatest beat-'em-ups ever made.



CENSORSHIP

Sometimes it could be argued that SNK, for all its marketing knowhow, erred far too much on the side of caution. In early Nineties America, *Mortal Kombat* had created quite a stir, Congress was talking about videogames and in general games were being frowned upon as a violent distraction for kids. Taking their lead from Nintendo's censorship of *Mortal Kombat*, SNK Japan censored *Samurai Shodown* for its Japanese release, without informing SNK America, leading to advertising confusion and causing SNK America no end of embarrassment. The fallout didn't end there for SNK either. So desperate were gamers to play the game in its original form that a mod chip was created to change machines' regions, and also allowed gamers to alter game configuration in the same way that a Game Genie might. Piracy became rife and, as we will see next issue, SNK suffered more than most.

controversial fighting games. Surprisingly, *Samurai Spirits* (*Shodown* in the West) didn't start life as a fighting game. "When we saw the original design documents for *Samurai Shodown* it was a horizontal scrolling action game," Kawasaki told Retro Gamer. "As there were many requests from our customers to develop more fighting arcade games, we changed to a more traditional fighter. The game structure was very similar to *Art Of Fighting* [such as the zoom in], but we used a totally different engine for it."

Much of the characters of the original game that Kawasaki referred to remained in place. Set in 18th Century feudal Japan, the game characters are indigenous stereotypes from their countries of origin, the music drawn from actual 18th Century scores – again, native to each country. This historical authenticity and accuracy carried right through to many of the combatants' clothes, weapons and backdrops. All this was lost on gamers though, who were enraptured by the frantic pace and tight gameplay it contained. Blood oozed and numerous fatalities littered the experience; this was *Barbarian* for the masses. Technical and tough, *Samurai Shodown* became the embodiment of the belief that SNK crafted games that appealed to gamers. SNK, it might be said, were hardcore. It wasn't just *Samurai Shodown* that led gamers to this conclusion. *Last Resort*, released quietly that same year, was wowing fans the world over as an potential *R-Type* beater. Boasting a natural evolution of the *Vanguard* gameplay, it soon garnered a reputation as one of the most unforgiving games of all time.

By 1993 SNK had a working template and a cohesive business model. It was doing well, and this situation would have seen it grow organically throughout the Nineties, but the burgeoning board at SNK Japan wanted more. It aspired to be on a par with the likes of Sega and Nintendo, not Capcom, which led to a round of acquisitions. Alpha Denshi was brought into the SNK fold and ADK was formed, with Sammy and Taito operating as second-party developers. And with companies like Data East and Visco acting as eager third parties, game development for the MVS and AES would reach an unprecedented high.

From 1993 to 1994 SNK saw a period of unprecedented range and uptake for MVS and AES games. ADK would become a prolific force inside SNK, creating such classics as *Aggressors Of Dark Kombat* and *World Heroes* . There was a sequel to *Art Of Fighting* that apologised for the original. New franchises also became abundant, never more so than with the 1994 inception of *The King Of Fighters*. The manifesto for the first *KOF* was to bring together characters from all the major SNK franchises past and present to create the ultimate battle royal. Unsurprisingly the game was a massive hit when it was released and from its launch became the only real contender to *Street Fighter*'s crown.

SNK, it would seem, had it all: a successful arcade board and system, a home entertainment division, very talented games creators and unyielding third-party support.

With so many possibilities it would seem almost unthinkable that the company from Osaka would be able to get the next few years so wrong, but nevertheless, that's exactly what happened…

In 1993 Sega released *Virtua Fighter* and *Virtua Racing* while Namco readied *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer* for release. The arcade boards these games used weighed in far heavier than the SNK MVS carts. The arcades were going 3D and SNK didn't have an answer. SNK Japan had its R&D department develop and eventually release *The Super Spy*, but in truth this game was sprite-based and had more in common with *Operation Wolf* than *Virtua Fighter*. Worse was to follow when



» Capcom delivered the seminal *Resident Evil* in 1996, a time of great change.



» *Last Resort* was a real contender to *R-Type*'s throne, but SNK overlooked it as it moved headlong into the fighting game genre.



» Sunsoft's *Waku Waku* provided a nice departure from the strait-laced beat-'em-ups that were around at the time.





» Still playing strong today, *World Heroes* was a revelation in its time, yet overlooked by all but a few.



» How MVS was announced to the US games industry. SNK America in jumpers.



» Originally created by Nazca, *Metal Slug* proved to be one of SNK's strongest franchises.

Sega and NEC both announced home-based CD system, while Sega was promising its Genesis users 3D gaming worlds.

It was at this time that Barone left SNK to join the Nevada gambling commission. SNK took the view that Japan could run the US operation and merged the two divisions into one. Kent Russell saw the writing on the wall and, sensing that he would be surplus to requirements, left for Sega.

This move essentially left SNK in the US rudderless. Marty Kitazawa was hastily promoted to president of SNK America and continued to liaise with Japan, but for now SNK Japan was running the operation.

In an effort to increase the NEO-GEO take-up rate, SNK developed a CD version of the AES. Released in Japan in 1995, it sold its initial production run of 25,000 units in a day. The arcade sticks were replaced by cheaper-to-manufacture game pads, and an all-round smarter console hit the shelves at $200 less than the AES. The games, too, now retailed at the same price point of Sega and Nintendo titles. It seemed that SNK had learnt a lot over the last two years and, despite its abhorrent loading times, NEO-GEO CD was a success.

By the time SNK got the machine to the US things weren't so rosy. Sega's Saturn had arrived and the Sony PlayStation was mere weeks away from launching. Worse for SNK America, in Japan SNK had superseded the NEO-GEO CD with the CDZ (the same machine but with a double-sided drive that halved load times); the gaming press reported on the new CDZ and potential customers refused to commit to a machine that they already knew to be outdated. Worse would follow when SNK announced that *Samurai Shodown RPG*, one of the company's biggest selling games in Japan, would not receive a translation for the Western market. Subjected to consumer complaints for the last two years about the way it localised games, SNK elected to eliminate the problem by not releasing

THE ARCADES WERE GOING 3D AND SNK DIDN'T HAVE AN ANSWER

titles that would require much localisation outside Japan. Potential customers acknowledged this by adopting 32-bit systems instead.

By 1996 gaming had changed significantly; SNK somehow hadn't adapted. So while gamers took a young Lara Croft home for the first time and idled their arcade time away on games like *Virtua On* and *Ridge Racer*, SNK had continued to release one-on-one fighters. By now AES games were not readily available in the shops and were ordered direct from SNK. In Japan this didn't pose a problem, but in the US and Europe this resulted in many unfilled orders. The best example of this was *Metal Slug*; made by Nazca (Kawasaki liked the game so much that he bought the company) and released to the arcades in 1996 it garnered a huge fan base. The home version was released on AES in Japan and sold well. Despite this, *Metal Slug* was a slow burner in the US and Europe and by the time gamers had warmed to it, orders couldn't be fulfilled because stocks were exhausted.

SNK was struggling, arcade revenues were down and its home systems couldn't compete with the new rivals. The future for SNK looked uncertain, but Kawasaki wasn't perturbed, he could see a way…

NEXT MONTH: THE FINAL PART OF OUR SNK TRILOGY.

Thanks to the lovely Killer List of Videogames for several images.



THE MAKING OF...

LEMMINGS 1 AND 2



With their distinctive green hair, cute demeanour, a penchant for jumping off cliffs and self-exploding tendencies, Lemmings are fondly remembered by gamers everywhere. Mike Dailly and Gary Timmons reveal to Kim Wild how one animation became an established series.



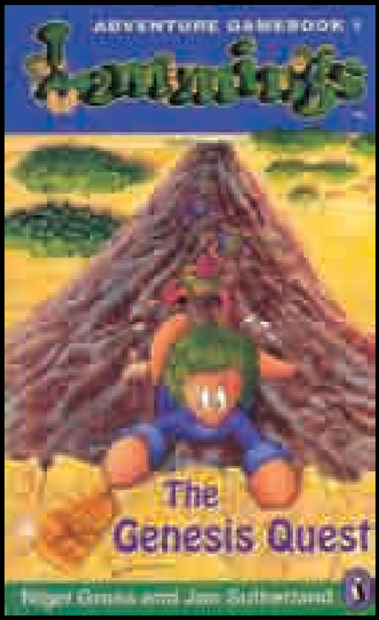


"IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THEY WERE LIKE LEMMINGS AND THE NAME STUCK!" GARY TIMMONS

L*emmings* is a game that transcends all barriers of gaming, appealing to young and old alike across many generations. Using just the mouse, the player must guide each lemming home by making use of the skills available, whether it's digging, climbing or floating their way to victory. With superb level design and a smooth learning curve, *Lemmings* is a piece of software that screams planning. It's hard to imagine, then, that its concept originated from an argument over how many pixels could be used to create a small, animated character. The team had been working on *Walker* for the Amiga, which featured lots of running men, and Mike Dailly argued that they could be made smaller. "I had maintained that they could be 8 pixels tall (rather than 16). So I created a small animation that demonstrated the new size and showed it to the rest of the guys. However, as luck would have it I had created them walking over a landscape and had added a couple of deaths for them. This struck them all as pretty funny, and from then on the ideas on how to use them came thick and fast, and everyone was determined to use them in a game." It was at this point a character was born. "It was suggested that they were like lemmings – and the name stuck!" recalls Gary Timmons.



» This concept drawing by Gary Timmons shows how the lemmings are meant to look for box art illustrations.



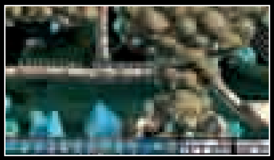
» *The Genesis Quest* is an adventure gamebook based on the storyline of *Lemmings 2: The Tribes*.

After the realisation that a game could be created, Gary set to work on improving the animation of the lemming. "I modified the walking animation that Mike had done to make them more fluid and then worked on some other actions. The animations were only a few pixels high but that was sufficient due to the power of suggestion. The plan for the game was to put many lemmings on screen at once, so they were reduced from about six colours to three colours to make it easier for the Amiga to display up to 100 on one level. The idea for the game was that the lemmings would manipulate their environment, so we decided on a variety of ways this could be done by removing or adding bits of the background. Then I had to animate them, paying particular attention to the way the hair moved. I animated the action and then had to lay out all the sprites in a line and provide a list of offset values to determine how they would move on screen."

Interestingly, it was the technical limitations of the PC at the time that determined the look of the lemmings themselves. "The colours were born from a programming problem on the PC" explains Mike. "We knew from day one that we wanted to make it over several platforms (mainly because we didn't want Dave [Jones] to have all the fun) and this meant getting the same visual on all platforms, so we looked at all the limiting factors and the PC had the biggest problems. CGA was rubbish no matter what, but with a little tweaking EGA would be reasonably nice. So because of the limitations of EGA we were left with the option of green hair/blue outfits, or

OH NO! EVEN MORE LEMMINGS!

With Psygnosis now a part of Sony, the *Lemmings* license remains with them and has been put to good use most recently. An EyeToy game for PlayStation 2 has been released and the PlayStation 3 has *Lemmings* available for download. The most prominent *Lemmings* title is the version of the game released for the PSP, which provoked an interesting response from Mike regarding Team 17. "I found it a little ironic that they did the new *Lemmings* as we always thought they were pinching our ideas. I remember we put in bouncing bombs in *Lemmings 3* and a while after it came out, *Worms* had it as well. Still, while I've not played it (I can do without another *Lemmings* game!) – it looks okay, pretty enough. I just wish they'd spend more time doing original games and not churning out more of the same game."



IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** PSYGNOSIS
» **DEVELOPER:** DMA DESIGN
» **RELEASED:** 1991 (LEMMINGS); 1993 (LEMMINGS 2: THE TRIBES)
» **GENRE:** PUZZLE GAME
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10

THE MAKING OF...
LEMMINGS 1 AND 2



"WE WANTED TO USE THEME TUNES LIKE MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, BUT DAVE AND PSYGNOSIS GOT NERVOUS AND THE IDEA WAS DROPPED" MIKE DAILLY



» Sometimes a lemming has to be sacrificed for the greater good. Sad but true.

blue hair and green outfits. We preferred the green hair." Gary also feels that the colour scheme made the lemmings unique: "I thought the green hair would be different and distinctive and was easy to achieve using the colour sliders in the software. The choice of colour for the outfit was to contrast the hair."

However, the PC version still turned out slightly differently. "The limitations of the PC at the time meant we had to reduce the maximum number of lemmings in a level from 100 to 80," recalls Gary. "I would have preferred it if the levels had the same maximum number of lemmings on these two formats."



» The title screen for the sadly scrapped *Lemmings* arcade game.

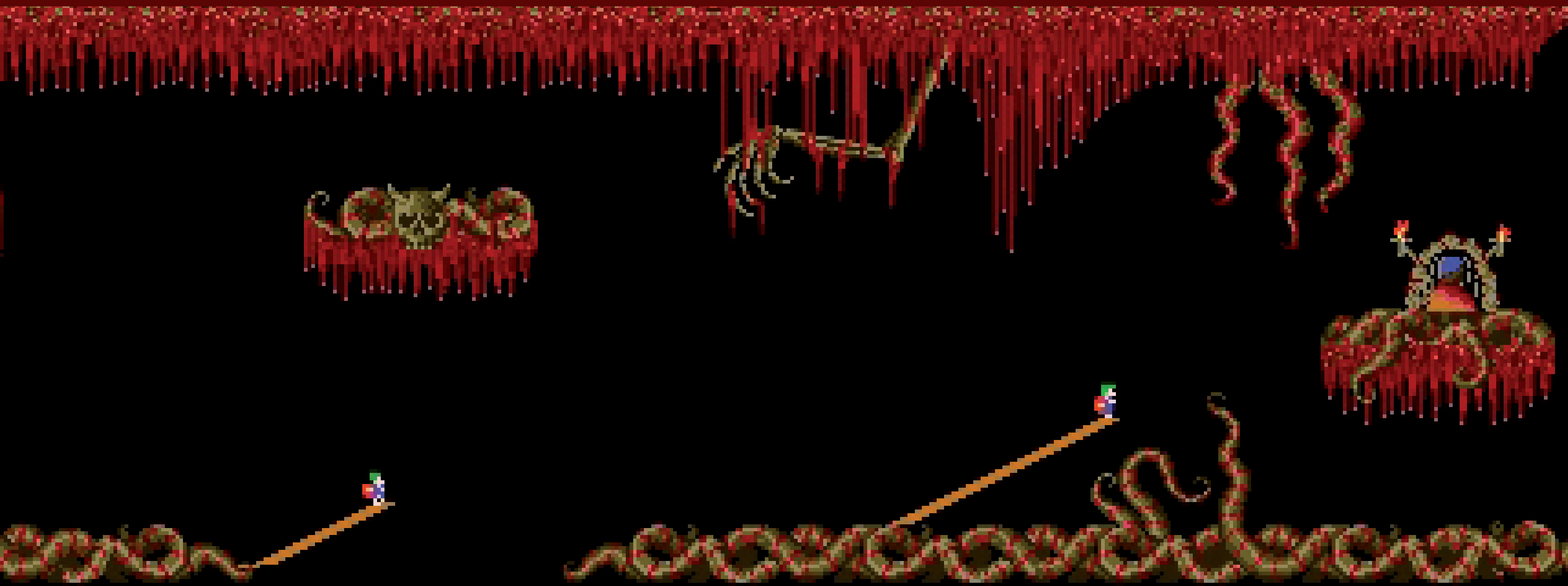
"It would also have been nice to get the two-player mode on the PC, but there were no mouse drivers that allowed two mice at the point, so that was out as well," laments Mike.

With the look in place, giving them a voice in the form of the immortal words "let's go!", "oh no!" and cries of "yippee" upon finally reaching their home gave the green-haired creatures even more appeal. "Brian Johnstone did all the sounds, and although we know his mum supplied the first ever lemmings voice, I have no idea how he came up with the idea," says Mike. "We knew that they had to be cute – and I guess he just came up with what was appropriate. He did a great job, and it would have been a different experience without them."

The creation of the levels themselves was a case of experimentation and making challenges for other members of the team. "We would spend hours making harder and harder ones to try and beat the rest of the team; this of course never happened," recalls Mike. "We were masters by this time and it would only take a few seconds to spot the solution, and then a couple more to actually complete the level. Gary, Scott and myself were the main level makers with Dave throwing in the odd level every now and then, but the problem was we had a stack of really good but difficult levels and no easy ones. So Dave got Gary to do some training levels and then tweak the current ones into a nice difficulty curve rather than dropping them in at the deep end. Each of us had our own way of thinking them up, but I liked to draw pretty pictures. I'd either think of a nice puzzle, or a picture I wanted to use for a level and go from there."

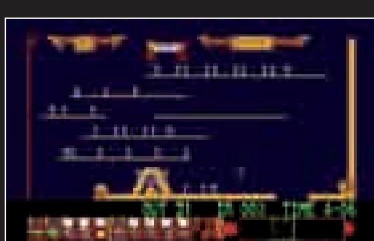
Those who have spent many hours playing the levels will recall humming along to classic tunes, including 'How Much Is That Doggy In The Window?', 'Ten Green Bottles' and 'London Bridge Is Falling Down' among others. Such songs were deliberately chosen due to being out of copyright. "We originally wanted to use old TV theme tunes like *Mission Impossible*, but Dave and Psygnosis got nervous and the idea was dropped. I've never figured out why we didn't just do a stack of original tunes," remarks Mike.

Although *Lemmings* is regarded primarily as an Amiga title, the

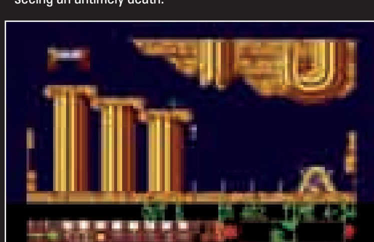


game was designed and written across the Amiga, PC and Atari ST concurrently by different members of the team. Russell Kay was responsible for programming the PC title, while the Atari ST game was started by Mike Dailly and finished by Brian Watson. Inevitably, *Lemmings* would go on to be ported across many platforms including the Game Gear, Master System, Atari Lynx, Game Boy, SNES, Spectrum and Macintosh, some of which DMA Design had some involvement with. "We wrote versions for the Spectrum, CD-I, CDTV, and Atari Lynx," says Mike. "The Lynx version was great and is still hailed as probably the pinnacle of Lynx game development. Several ports did impress us – the Game Boy one, for example, was very well done, as was the SNES." Gary Timmons feels that the computer versions were the most effective: "The game was designed to be played with a mouse, so the ones that used a mouse worked best. It wasn't as easy to quickly select a lemming in the versions that used a joypad."

Oh No! More Lemmings was released shortly after the original with 100 new levels. "*Oh No!* was supposed to be a data disk, but since the traps were code-driven this wasn't possible, so we simply made a whole new game from



» Blockers are put to good use and prevent lemmings from seeing an untimely death.



» One lemming does an audition for Mary Poppins.



» At high speed, the lemmings are a mesmorising army of green hair.

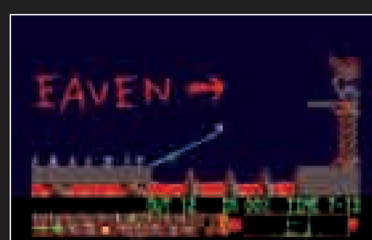
it," comments Mike. "These were also the first batch of levels to be made by folk other than the original team."

Before work began on the sequel, *Lemmings* took on a festive appearance. "*Christmas Lemmings* was originally done as a promo. We did a few levels complete with the lemmings dressed in Santa outfits and gave it away on cover disks. But, Psygnosis being Psygnosis thought they'd cash in on this and came up with *Holiday Lemmings*."

THE TRIBAL EFFECT

With *Lemmings* proving an instant hit with the specialist press and public alike, a sequel was inevitable and in 1993 *Lemmings 2: The Tribes* arrived. This time around, there was something resembling a storyline. The Lemming Island is made up of twelve tribes comprised of classic, space, polar, highland, beach, sports, shadow, outdoor, circus, cavelem, medieval and Egyptian, each with their own culture and skills that are unique to a particular species. Each tribe possesses a piece of talisman but prophecy talks of an impending darkness that will force the colonies into extinction. To be saved, the tribes must be evacuated and the pieces of the talisman reunited so a vessel can transport the lemmings out of harm's way.

The decision to create a sequel had much to do with the popularity of the



» It's not every game in which you can build a literal stairway to heaven.

original. "Psygnosis wanted more *Lemmings* and we'd just about milked the original to death, so we needed a new version," says Mike. "This time Dave sat down and actually thought about other platforms in the design while he came up with the basic concept." However, the success of *Lemmings* meant there was considerable pressure to deliver, which Mike recalls vividly. "There was quite a bit during *Lemmings 2* and, although Dave usually managed to keep it from us, we were in for some late nights and a couple of all-nighters."

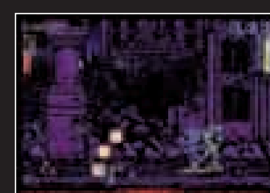
Such dedication invoked some interesting ideas. Although the basics were the same – use the sets of skills of the individual lemmings to reach the goal – the tribes could be tackled in any order, rather than working from one level to another. Given the game's considerable difficulty, this worked very well in its

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BLOOD MONEY
SYSTEMS: C64, AMIGA, ATARI ST
YEAR: 1989

WALKER
SYSTEMS: AMIGA
YEAR: 1993

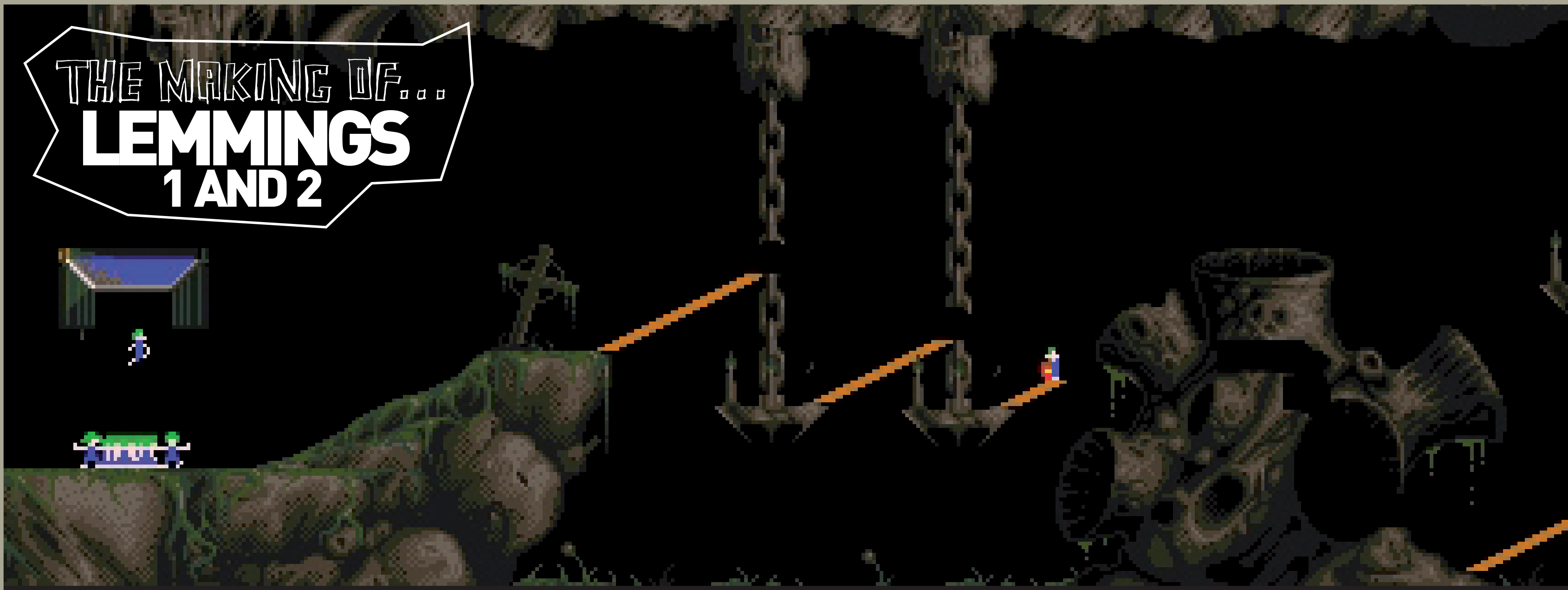
HIRED GUNS
SYSTEMS: AMIGA
YEAR: 1993



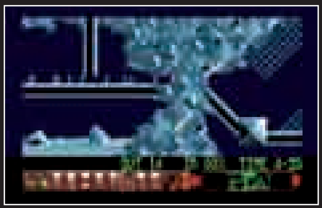
THE REAL LEMMINGS

The basis for the lemmings comes from the real-life rodents that live in the tundra. Their fur is brown but turns white during winter. Unlike many rodents, lemmings do not hibernate in winter: their white coat is thicker and their short legs and tail help reduce heat loss. They also live in burrows in the snow, which is a great insulator. The idea that lemmings commit suicide en masse is a misconception originating from Disney nature film *White Wilderness* (1958): the film-makers purchased a thousand lemmings and herded them off a cliff into a river to simulate the animals marching to their deaths. Scandinavian lemmings have been known to migrate when food is scarce, swimming across large pools of water to find land, but any deaths as a result of this are purely accidental and not out of suicidal intent.





THE MAKING OF… LEMMINGS 1 AND 2



» Some levels require copious use of just one skill.



» Super Lemming shows Superman how flying should be done.



» Many hazards await our friends – be careful they don't step on the switches!

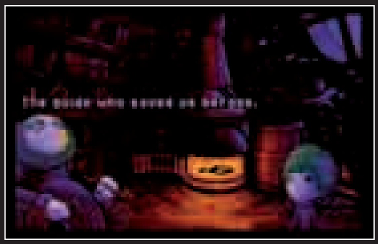


» One for all and all for one, as our brave lemming fences his way through the wall.

favour. "The problem with *Lemmings* was that if you got stuck on a level, then you pretty much got stuck in the whole game. What we were aiming for was a way to give you at least some choice when you got stuck on a level, and this is pretty much why the tribes appeared," explains Mike. There was also a grading system introduced which awarded you with a bronze, silver or gold placing depending on how many lemmings were saved in a particular level. As levels could get very tricky even early on for a tribe, this was a blessing as it meant you didn't remain stuck on one section for a long time. It also had its downside: only the saved lemmings would make it through to the next level, meaning you had to be very careful if you 'accidentally' destroyed half of the tribe! "This was a really easy feature to add and it did create more gameplay and make the game last longer," continues Mike. "People wanted to get 100% all the way through, which meant they sometimes had to play entire tribes again to pick up the number of saved lemmings. Simple change… but easy and a good one."

Lemmings 2 introduced a fast-forward option, which was taken from the planned arcade version of the original game – sadly cancelled in the early stages. "Psygnosis and Data East were working to bring a version to the arcade, but the slow gameplay wasn't very nice for the fast pace of arcade machines, so they added this feature [fast-forward]; we then stole it," says Mike. "It was brilliant. Newer versions of *Lemmings* implement this and its now very hard to play the original Amiga or PC ones without it. When writing games you have a 'process' and a 'draw'. Process moves things around the world, does collisions with things like traps or water and deals with mouse clicks and lemming selection. Drawing does just that: draws *everything* to the screen. In fast-forward mode, we just call the 'process' a couple of times instead of once, and hey presto… faster lemmings. While this does slow down the frame rate, because everything is moving so fast, you don't notice."

What also stands out regarding *The Tribes* are the huge array of skills available. In order to fit in with the levels, the skills were themed: space would feature jet packs and gravity boots, sports levels featured hang-gliding and surfer skills, while Egyptian levels had platform builders and attractors. The animations were quite effective despite being small, with jet pack lemming proving one of the trickier ones to get the movement right.

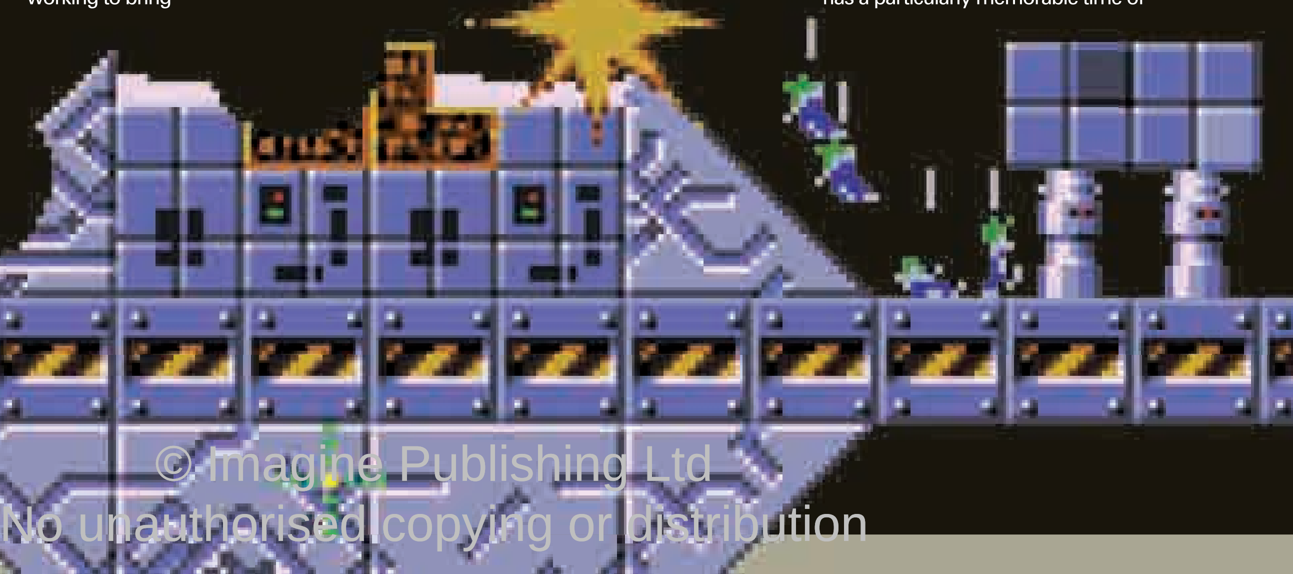


» In the *Lemmings 2* intro, the little guys appeal to your very soul. No pressure then.

"Gary spent *ages* doing the fan animation and designing it so that it sped up and slowed down just right and at any point, whereas the animations themselves were pretty simple," recalls Mike.

Some skills worked well (there's something endearing in seeing a lemming dive off a cliff or fly across the screen like Superman) but at times there were too many and they were hard to use. Twister in particular, where you used a fan to spin a lemming through the ground, was fiddly despite its effectiveness. Mike agrees that the skills didn't always work as planned. "Loads didn't work: roller, skater, pole vaulter. Puzzles were added to use these skills rather than the other way around. Some worked pretty well such as grower, archer – and all the classic ones. I think there were way too many skills, most of which did pretty much the same thing, while others were pointless. Roller… why?"

Despite the sequel not gelling together as well as the original, Mike has a particularly memorable time of

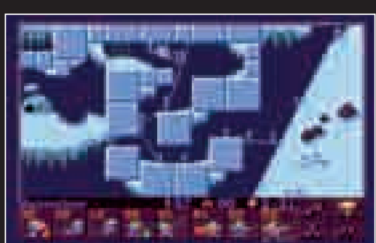




"IN THE END, LEMMINGS 2 HAD SOME GREAT TECH, BUT THE GAME WAS OVERLY COMPLEX." MIKE DAILLY



» Loch Ness, complete with monster, is just one of the imaginative locations in the world of *Lemmings 2*.



» Some effective rope skills are required to make it through this level.

his work on the SNES conversion which, interestingly, is far better than its Amiga and PC counterparts. "During *Lemmings 2* I had quite a bit of extra time due to a screw-up at Psygnosis, and I got to put in some great touches that makes the SNES one a step up from the others. Each level was tweaked and improved, including parallax backdrops to the game which added some real depth, and I even added snow to the polar levels! I had so much time, I played with the super scope and put in a cheat where by if you plug it into the second controller, you could shoot the lemmings! That was great fun! You could also switch on visual sound effects: little bits of text were drawn over the lemmings like speech bubbles."

Although the sequel never captured the magic of the original, it still manages to be an enjoyable game today. Upon being asked how the sequel was received, Mike feels it was praised a little too much at the time. " I suspect that many folk were so keen to get a new game, they didn't look too closely. I never thought it held together as well as the first, although I liked the tribes and different styles, not to mention being able to jump back and forth when you get stuck on a level. There were some good reviews, but none of them really hit the heights *Lemmings* did – which isn't really a surprise, I guess. In the end, *Lemmings 2* had some great tech, but the game was overly complex."

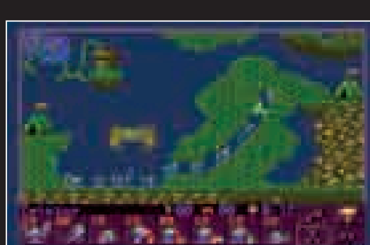
A NEW GENERATION

By the time the third game in the series came along, change was underway at DMA Design. A new team was focused on *All New World Of Lemmings*. This time the game focused on three of the tribes – Classic, Egyptian and Shadow – with a huge reduction in skills. Further games following the other tribes were to be released, but the licence for *Lemmings* was sold to Psygnosis, meaning this concept never reached a conclusion. Instead, an assortment of spin-offs emerged including *Lemmings Paintball*, *Lemmings Revolution*, *Lomax The Lemming* and the ludicrous *Lemmings 3D*. "There were significant control and lemmings graphics changes for *All New World Of Lemmings*," remarks Gary. "I didn't have involvement in *Paintball*, *Lomax* or *Revolution*. *Lemmings Paintball* was written by Russell Kay at his new company Visual Sciences, while the *All New World Of Lemmings* was written back at DMA – the team were new boys but still had Dave behind the helm and Gary drawing the lemmings. *Lemmings Revolution* was pretty nice-looking but still the same basic gameplay, and none of us were involved in it – same goes for *Lemmings 3D* (except for the 'pretty nice' part). Once Psygnosis bought the rights from DMA, they went their own way and did various games with the characters – *Lomax* being another."

Neither of the creators were particularly impressed with *Lemmings 3D*. "I didn't play it much," admits Gary. "I thought it was a brave attempt but I felt the fundamental core of the game of digging or building across the landscape to rescue the lemmings didn't need an extra dimension. The 3D levels required a new way of thinking compared to the 2D game which I think was maybe the problem for some players," he explains rather diplomatically. Mike is a little more forthcoming: "We had nothing to do with that one, it was badly thought out and plain rubbish."

Yet, for all the ill-advised follow-ups to the original, *Lemmings* is still fondly remembered for the cute appearance of its characters and for some of the most fiendish levels ever created. Gary Timmons sums up his thoughts on its popularity. "It was quite a unique concept: the save-'em-up! It appealed to a wide audience and had some nice quirky features. There was a lot of humour in the game – including an image of lemming paw prints to signify the pause option. It was done at a time when development was less formal and we were just a small team, so we had a bit more liberty to design as we went along. It was fun to work on and I'm pleased that many people liked it."

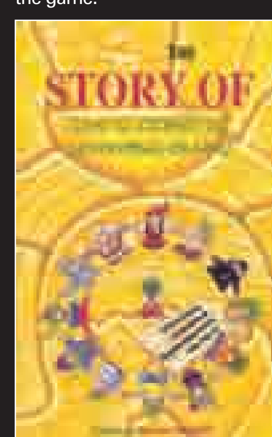
Acknowledgements to Mike Dailly's website for some of the images. Visit http://www.javalemmings.com/DMA/Lem_1.htm for even more lemmings info.



» The twister lemming: effective but at times difficult to control.

THE STORY OF THE TWELVE TRIBES

Many games generate merchandise throughout their life span, whether it's badges, T-shirts or mugs, and *Lemmings* isn't an exception. Some of the more interesting items have been books released to coincide with the games. An *Official Companion* book written by Mark Tsai and AJ Aranyosi contained detailed walkthroughs for each level in *Lemmings* and 16 levels from *Oh No! More Lemmings*. One book, which we have a copy of and is a nice item for collectors, is *The Story of The Twelve Tribes*, written by Richard Biltcliffe and illustrated by Dave and Sue Rowe. The book sees the Chosen One, Jimmy McLemming from the Highlands, visit the other 11 tribes and inform them of their need to evacuate from certain death. Humorously written and illustrated with cartoon artwork of the different tribes at work, it's a nice companion piece to the game.



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?





» **Right Top:** "A photo taken of me by a friend the day before I flew to Guyana for 10 days. We were going to be way away from modern civilisation for the entire time, so I wanted a photo of how I looked before I went in to compare the 'after' photo with. (You'll note that I did not include the 'after' photo.)" **Right:** "A photo that my wife took of me in Ireland in August of 2003."

DATAFILE

NAME: ED ROTBERG

DATE OF BIRTH: 21/6/51

FIRST JOB: GOLF CADDY

CURRENTLY: TECHNICAL LEAD, MINESHAFT DEVELOPMENT

FAVOURITE FILM: FORBIDDEN PLANET

ED ROTBERG



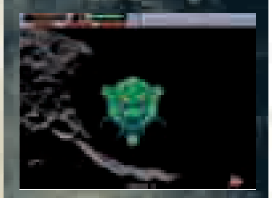
» **Right:** Ed heading off from Chicago to join Atari in 1978, suitably prepared.

HIS NICKNAME MIGHT BE GONZO, BUT HE'S NO MUPPET. HAVING SPENT THREE DECADES IN THE GAMES BUSINESS, WITH SPELLS AT ATARI AND 3DO, ED ROTBERG CAN INCLUDE SUCH CLASSICS AS BLASTEROIDS, S.T.U.N. RUNNER AND BATTLEZONE ON HIS CV. PAUL DRURY TRIES HARD NOT TO ASK HIM ABOUT ANY HIDDEN CAVES.

YOU MUST PLAY...

Blasteroids

Battlezone may be his most famous creation, but Ed's reworking of *Asteroids* manages to cram in a host of clever, prescient ideas without losing the simple, hypnotic charm of the original. *Blasteroids* is best played on a dedicated cab, which uses a dial to spin your ship; and with a mate so you can take advantage of the innovative 'docking' feature, allowing the captain of the smaller craft to piggyback onto the larger vessel and concentrate on blasting the assorted space debris and deadly foes. This rocks. Sorry.



Ed Rotberg can remember his first time like it was yesterday. "We met in a bar on Ross Street, Chicago. I was really taken by it. *Pong* really got me excited."

And thus a long marriage with videogames began. Graduating from the University of Michigan in the early Seventies meant his future bride was still in her infancy though. Ed took a job in a pharmaceutical lab interfacing microcomputers but coded little games in his spare time, so when a friend spotted an advert for programmers at Atari in 1978, he sent in his CV "for a lark."

"They must have seen enough in me to give me a phone interview," Ed chuckles. "I'd worked with microcomputers and real-time systems and that was pretty much what arcade games were back then. I got the job and Atari was beyond my wildest expectations: a group of extremely talented people having fun and doing creative things. That's what's kept me in this business for all this time. It's what I mourn about the industry now. I've worked with a lot of companies and people since and Atari remains the benchmark."

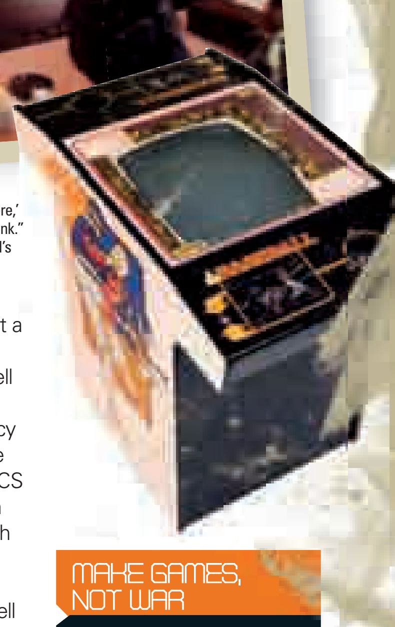
An enthusiastic Ed stepped up to the plate and was elated when management tossed him his first project: to use the hardware developed for the highly successful trackball-controlled *Atari Football* and produce a baseball game. As a fanatic of the sport, he jumped at the chance and, despite the primitive technology, he tried to give his first release a voice of its own.

"We had a prototype speech chip, driven by a lot of pulse-code-modulated data sitting in an EPROM, streamed out to the audio device – long samples, if you will.



» An Atari brainstorming session attended by, amongst others, Howie Delman, Morgan Hoff and Ray Kassar. The proliferation of dark glasses suggests most spent the previous evening in a hot-tub…





» **Above:** "I can't remember what game idea I was pitching here,' says Ed. "Something about klaxons and umbilical cords, I think."
» **Right:** The stylish but non-speaking production version of Ed's first game, *Atari Baseball*.

It said four words: Ball, Strike, Safe and You're Out. It never made it into production, partly because of cost and also it was being sold as a retrofit to the football game, which didn't have that feature. I believe it would have been the first game with speech if it had made it – the one sitting in my garage has it!"

It's an early indication of the ambition Rotberg had and helps explain why he embraced the opportunity to take game design into the third dimension. "One of the courses I took in college was computer graphics," he recalls. "It was taught by Jim Blinn, one of the grandfathers of computer image synthesis. He was still a grad student at the time but he taught me my first 3D stuff and when Atari came out with vector displays, we had the means to do something more than blocky pixels. One of the guys cooked up the idea of using some bit-sliced processors to do matrix transformations and we did a lot of cheating to make it go fast. Now we had the tools to do some primitive 3D and I just had a real desire to sink my teeth into it."

Two teams were formed to take advantage of this new technology. Ed headed up the group working on *Future Tank* and whilst the rival team managed to get an early version of *Red Baron* on screen first, Ed's methodical approach – "I always start with how the data is organised and that dictates how the program flows" – meant the re-titled *Battlezone* got to market first. He remains admirably modest about this ground-breaking achievement. "I think *Tail Gunner* is the first arcade 3D game by a bit but our graphics were more detailed and you could move around in the environment. *Battlezone* was 3D in a 2D world. You couldn't move up or down – there was a little vertical motion with the missiles that drop from the sky and hop over things – but the graphics were truly three-dimensional."

A barrier had clearly been broken. Visiting an arcade in 1980 and pushing your eyes up against the periscope that adorned the initial versions of *Battlezone* was like entering a new world. Urban digital legends arose of a mysterious cave that could be reached if you drove your tank relentlessly towards the distant landscape of volcanic mountains. Whilst the secret cave is indeed a myth, other intriguing features might have made the final release if not for the demands of the production facility at Atari, which cut development time short.

"We had plans to dim out the vectors so it would seem like night was falling," remembers Ed, "and I wanted to add urgency with a new missile that would fly up and come back on top of you. You'd only have a very, very short time to shoot it. You'd see it rising from these missile tubes on your radar and you had to rush over and blow them up before they launched…"

"ATARI WAS BEYOND MY WILDEST EXPECTATIONS… I'VE WORKED WITH A LOT OF COMPANIES AND PEOPLE SINCE AND IT REMAINS THE BENCHMARK"
ED ROTBERG

The massive success of *Battlezone* meant that the US military took an interest (see boxout) and inevitably there was talk of a sequel, but Ed moved on to a project that took the modified controls of *Army Battlezone* and threw them into deep space. Internally known as *Warp Speed*, Ed led the team that would see the idea eventually evolve into the all-conquering *Star Wars*, but he left his beloved Atari before the licence was secured and founded Videa in partnership with colleagues Howie Delman and Roger Hector.

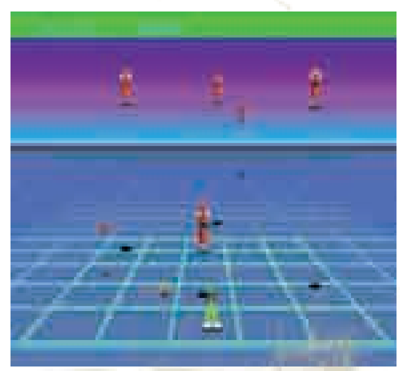
"We had stars in our eyes! We had seen the Activision and Imagic guys making lots of cash with consumer games and thought we could do alright on our own making arcade stuff. We set up one of the first small independent development groups and got a contract with Gottlieb to do *Gridlee*. It was a 3D game using 2D hardware and looked a lot better than it played. The gameplay mechanic was just a bit too weird."

Boot it up on MAME and you may well agree but, undeterred, Videa branched out and stayed afloat by producing a fancy laser disc point-of-sale system for a shoe manufacturer and self-funded a pair of VCS games – *Lasercade* and *Reactor* – which fell victim to the Great Videogames Crash of the mid-Eighties.

Fortunately, an old friend came to the rescue when Atari founder Nolan Bushnell re-entered the fray. His new company Sente (the name taken from the countering move to 'Atari' in the board game Go) bought Videa, though lighting the fat cigars proved premature.

"We thought we'd made it," enthuses Ed. "But we got paid in a lot of stock, which we had to hold on to… and watched it slowly go down and down. When Nolan unveiled the Sente system, he said we'd be producing six games per quarter, which was a huge number for our small company. We tried to do quality games, but the time pressure was tough. I think the operators would have preferred one good game to six mediocre ones, but Nolan had made a promise."

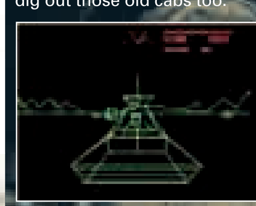
Whilst Ed freely admits projects like *Goalie Ghost*, a collaboration with Owen Rubin, were "slapped together", his involvement with the classy *Hat Trick* and the whip-cracking *Snake Pit* is still a source of pride. Yet Ed was uncomfortable with his managerial role at Sente and missed the hands-on programming, so in 1987 he returned to his old coding ground of Atari to work on a modern version of Ed



» Only a single *Gridlee* cabinet was ever produced, now owned by the aptly named Dale Luck. Thankfully, Ed's made it freely available through MAME.

MAKE GAMES, NOT WAR

Military Intelligence may be an oxymoron but the US Army made one of their better decisions when they approached Atari to produce a special version of *Battlezone* for training new recruits. Ed was less than pleased though. "I'm a bit of a pacifist, so I didn't really want to help train people to kill, plus if you have a military contract the government can really impose a lot of restrictions on your company, which I didn't think was healthy for Atari. But management were under the gun to get it done, so I agreed, as long as I was absolved of any future involvement once it was done."
Ed and his team implemented several key upgrades to the original *Battlezone*. Weapons now included a machine gun, armour-piercing and incendiary shells, and a tow missile that required the trainee gunner to keep the crosshair fixed on the target after firing. "You had to fire on a trajectory not a straight line," adds Ed, "and we put in a x3 and x12 magnification control like in the real gunner station. It was meant to be a casual training device for the Infantry Fighting Vehicle, so you'd be able to recognise the silhouettes of friends as opposed to foes. They still use those vehicles, you know." Given the incidents of 'friendly fire' of late, maybe they should dig out those old cabs too.



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

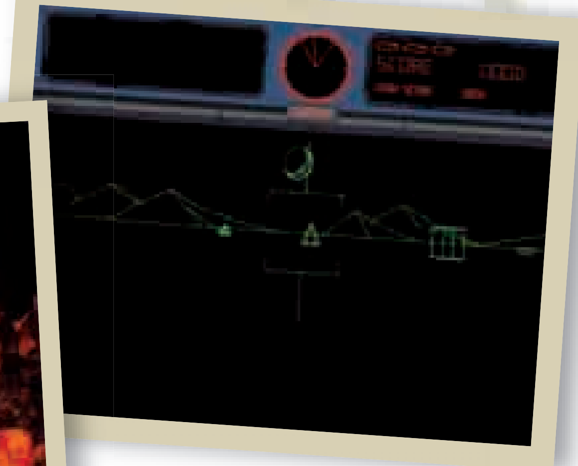
WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



» Ed in '85, sporting a Chicago Bears jersey and seeking inspiration from a dark source…



» **Below:** Atari coin-op at The Kings Manor, Chicago on the inaugural Shermy Awards Night. Back row (l-r): Howard Delman, John Ray, Steve Calfee, serving wench, Rich Moore, Owen Rubin. Front row: Mike Albaugh, Ed Rotberg.



» The green and desolate *Battlezone*, with a crescent earth in the sky.

TRIP, STUMBLE AND FALL

"Trip Hawkins gets a lot of abuse but I think the world of him," states Ed, who reported directly to the head of 3DO during his time there. "He wears his heart on his sleeve and cares about the people who work for him. Sometimes his decisions are dead on and sometimes they're not. Mistakes were made at 3DO but never because he didn't care and he spent a lot of his own money keeping it afloat." During his spell there, Ed led the team that produced *Station Invasion*, an edutainment title about a bunch of kids taking over a TV channel, which was high on FMV but short on content due to a painfully short eight-month development cycle. More promising was *World Championship Racing*, slated as a launch title for the M2 console to showcase the machine's potential. "We had it running at 30fps and no pop-up which was pretty significant at the time. The guys who'd worked on *Hard Drivin'* did the physics, which were really good, and I'd put a couple of years into this cool racing game." Sadly, it crashed and burned in the wreckage of the ill-fated M2 project. Shame.

Logg's seminal *Asteroids*. *Blasteroids* is one of the rare occasions when an update manages to add a slew of interesting features whilst retaining the spirit of the original. Multiple routes, boss battles, co-operative gameplay and ship morphing add new levels of strategy and the striking visuals further demonstrate the innovation at work.

Ed continued this creative streak with 1989's *S.T.U.N. Runner*, a futuristic racer with a blistering pace and a behemoth of a cabinet. "We had this marvellous cab group that not only designed them, they did the side art, graphics on the bezels and they came up with the cycle you could sit on. Man, it was beautiful! The game concept came from a gal called Carol Cameron at a brainstorming session who had the idea of racing in tubes. That's

"BATTLEZONE WAS THREE MONTHS WHEN I WAS AT THE OFFICE FOR 18 HOURS, CAME HOME, WENT TO BED, HARDLY SAW MY WIFE… IT WAS A LOST PERIOD OF MY LIFE" ED ROTBERG

"We bought some lava rocks that you use for fireplaces and painted them white. We stuck a camera and a light on them and a computer-controlled motor to rotate them to specific orientations. We digitised each frame so we had a range of 'stamps', or sprites if you will, and we could do the 3D rotation by animating through those. The ships were digitised from models too, made by a guy called Bill George who worked on *Star Wars* for Lucasfilm."

what it began as, but back then games grew in the telling. You'd start down one route but had the freedom to take a different path if that seemed better. We always tried to follow the fun."

But the fun for Ed was about to end. After collaborating with buddy Ed Logg on *Steel Talons*, he had ambitious plans to create an online virtual gaming community. Instead, murky office politics meant he was assigned a soul-destroying stint entering data for the move list on *Guardians Of The 'Hood*. When management ignored his justifiable ire, he upped and left.

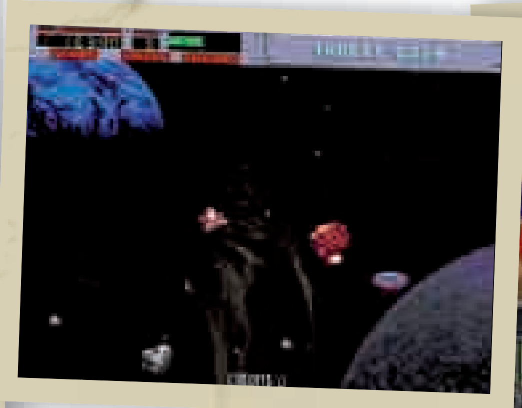


» *S.T.U.N. Runner*. Climb aboard. There's room for two.

But as Ed puts it, games were in his blood. After a spell at Apple, he joined 3DO and took charge of developing a high-profile launch title for the proposed M2 console (see boxout). He left Trip Hawkins and co behind after the ignominious cancellation of the project but has remained in game development ever since, setting up Mineshaft Entertainment in 2000, which is due to release an arcade conversion of Ubisoft's *Blazing Angels* and an undisclosed sports title for Nokia phones this summer.

So with almost 30 years spent producing games, does he ever get a little peeved that people still ask him about that non-existent cave in *Battlezone*? Ed laughs loudly. "Man, I'm immune to it now. I used to get annoyed – it was three months when I was at the office for 18 hours, came home, went to bed, hardly saw my wife… it was a lost period of my life. Interviewers were all excited about it and I was just angry! But hey, I've mellowed…"





» **Left:** *Snake Pit* trivia: Ed first created the algorithm used to make the snakes wriggle for the unreleased Atari project *Fire Beast*. You're welcome. **Above:** *Blasteroids*: Wait till you see the whites of his eyes…



» Mr Rotberg teamed up with Mr Logg on *Steel Talons*, proving that two Eds are better than one. Sorry.



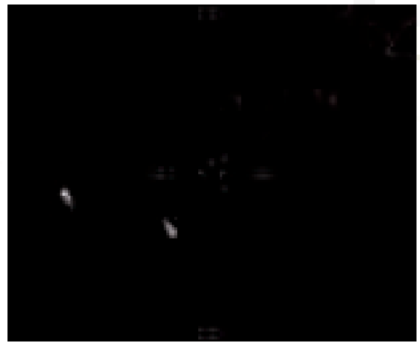
ED ROTBERG DESERT ISLAND DISKS



SPACE INVADERS

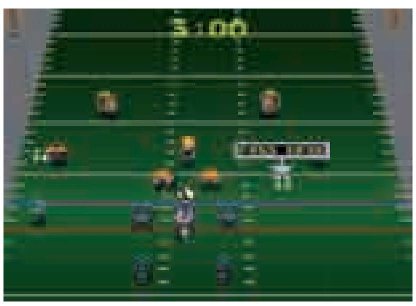
ARCADE

1 This was the first videogame that I got really, really hooked on. You know, sweaty hands, dreams about different strategies, agonising over how I could have avoided losing that last life. It broke ground in so many different areas for a whole generation of videogames.



RIP OFF ARCADE

2 Tim Skelly wrote a lot of games that I loved, but this one has a special place in my heart. I just loved the whole idea of co-operative play, and the fact that you were watching your partner's back. Very innovative – very addictive!



CYBERBALL ARCADE

3 I probably spent more time on this incredible game (and its sequel *Cyberball 2072*) than any other arcade game. John Salwitz and Dave Ralston took a familiar sporting game (at least to us Stateside) and, putting some very creative twists on it, made it both accessible and unique. Best played with four players (can you tell I like multiplayer games yet?).



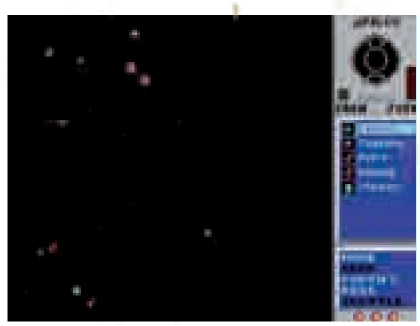
WARLORDS ARCADE

4 Another game that really only shined when you had the full complement of four players. But shine it did! It's loads of fun, both attacking and defending. Alliances form and break. A great game at a bar!!



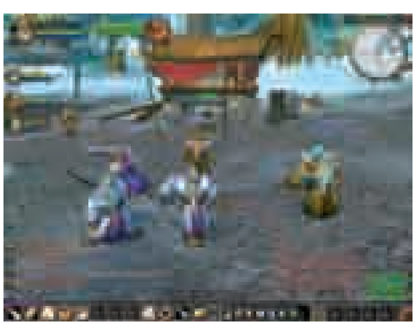
M.U.L.E ATARI 400/800

5 Dani (Dan) Bunten gave us a wonderful (but IMHO under-appreciated) game where greed, competition, collusion and skill all mixed in together to make for yet another great multiplayer game. It was one of the first games that was as much a social experience as a videogame.



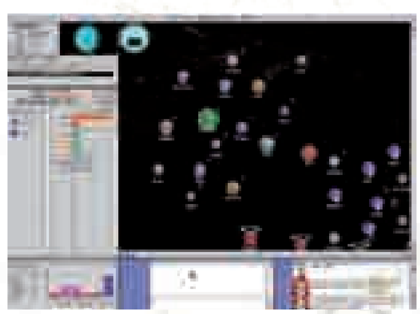
STAR CONTROL PC

6 This is my only single-player game here on the consumer side of things. A story-based science-fiction title, it could be played as an exploration and strategy game. For the nimble-fingered it was also a great shoot-'em-up. This incredibly deep game had me sucked in for a very long time!



WORLD OF WARCRAFT PC

7 My current addiction, this game is a brilliant execution of an MMOG genre game. The graphics are excellent and the gameplay is very, very well balanced. While it is, in many ways, derivative of *Everquest*, it has clearly raised the bar.



SPACEWARD HO!

MAC

8 A great game from a small company (Delta Tao), it's a resource management, exploration and strategy game. The AI is challenging, but the best way to play this is on a LAN with a group of friends. It was originally written for the Macintosh but it's been ported to Windows and Palm.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



Paranoid Marvin: How much persuading did Atari need to create a one-game specific cabinet?

Not much at all. Atari did custom cabs all the time. With *Battlezone*, the periscope idea was Morgan Hoff's. He really wanted to immerse you in the game. I was a bit opposed to it, not that I didn't like the periscope but I wanted others to watch people playing and the first design meant only the guy playing could see the screen. Eventually, they did put clear plastic panels on the sides so people could see in but even then, it wasn't really a spectator game and I worried that would hurt sales and earnings. I own a cabaret *Battlezone* cab, which doesn't have the periscope and so everyone can see what's going on.

Merman: For *Blasteroids*, how difficult was it to STOP making changes, ensuring it didn't get too far away from the original?

Ed Logg gave me the source code of *Asteroids*, so at its core is the original game. *Blasteroids* was a collaborative effort – Mike Hally come on board halfway through and added a lot of the multiple route stuff, the boss monsters, the popcorn asteroids and Pete Lipson helped a lot. There was a trend moving towards games with ends, as long as it was far enough away and hard enough to do, so you can defeat Mukor, which is a fun little battle. I think the co-operative idea came from Tim Skelly's *Rip Off* and I had this idea of a Rock Paper Scissors concept, so you could transform your ship into Fighter, Destroyer and Scout, each being better suited to a particular situation. We had more features planned, but our development time was cut from 12 to 10 months. To help with motivation, I promised to treat the team to a round of golf at Pebble Beach and yeah, we made the deadline.

Northway: Did you ever consider doing a hydraulic cabinet for *S.T.U.N. Runner* that could move, or was driving on the roof always considered a fundamental part of the design?

I don't recall that! We had done moving seats at Sente with a game called *Shrike Avenger*, but back then they were either really expensive or had liability questions. You don't want little kids wandering too close, getting bumped and suddenly you have a lawsuit on your hands!

Yakmag: The homing missile in *Battlezone* makes the noise of the spaceships in the Thirties *Flash Gordon* (well to me it does). Was this by accident or design?

[Laughs] It's making the noise we could make on the Pokey chip – one of the components used in the Atari 400/800 – which we used to make sounds in a number of games. It couldn't do a lot but it was good at buzzing sounds. Yeah, it was similar, though I never realised it at the time, but I love the old *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers* too – I remember growing up with them!

OriginalJax: Did you spend much time partying with Bushnell and the bikini girls at those 'Atari Corporate Meetings' in the hot-tub?

I spent a bit of time partying and Nolan does have that infamous hot-tub at his place. I wasn't one of the wilder people – I would have loved that reputation as a mad partier – but I was there and I saw a lot of stuff go on. I did get in the tub, but I was married and I took that seriously…

Cafeman: I believe you are a long-time guitar player, right? What are your favourite songs to play?

That changes, but I like Emerson Lake and Palmer's 'From The Beginning' and some Yes tunes. I go way back! You work at Atari, you learn a lot of songs…

For your chance to quiz future castaways please visit the Retro Gamer forums at www.retrogamer.net/forum

THE MAKING OF...

JETPAC REFUELLED

The original Jetpac catapulted Ultimate: Play the Game into the gaming stratosphere and continues to delight Spectrum owners some 24 years later. Darran Jones asks Rare why they decided to remake the Stamper's hallowed classic.



"WE WERE TRYING TO WORK OUT WAYS HOW WE COULD KEEP IT AS THE SAME GAME, BUT BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO IT SO THAT IT WOULD ALSO APPEAL TO A NEW GENERATION OF GAMERS" ANDY WILSON



When Microsoft first announced that the Stamper brothers were leaving Rare at the beginning of the year, one of the first things we started to ask ourselves was whether the two siblings would be taking their precious Ultimate brand intellectual property with them. After all, it's happened twice before and there was no reason not to think that the canny brothers would pull off exactly the same trick again. However, when screenshots of *Jetpac Refuelled* began circulating in late February it became obvious that not only had Microsoft secured the impressive IP, but that a brand-new update of Ultimate's very first game was on the way – and to Xbox Live Arcade no less.

Needless to say, as soon as the opportunity arose we took a trip up to Rare's development studios in Twycross, locked ourselves in a room with four of Refuelled's key developers and asked as many questions as we could about their excellent update.

"We were just having one of those conversations about what we'd do for our first Live Arcade game and how we would actually do it when someone suggested, 'How about doing *Jetpac* because it was Ultimate's first game?'" recalls Nick Burton, one of the driving forces behind the glorious update and Jetpac Refulled's lead programmer. "It was also one of the first Spectrum games that I ever played, so I said to myself, 'Yeah, I'll make that'."

"We've been interested in Xbox Live Arcade for a while," continues Andy Wilson, *Jetpac*'s producer. "It's probably one of the more accessible games that the Stampers had done and it's a nice small and easy package with which to test the waters with."





» Two early sketches of Pete Hentze's Jetman, with and without helmet.

It may well have been Ultimate's first game and therefore the perfect parallel for Rare's first Live release, but what drew everyone involved to the actual project?

"It was probably the first, I'll say, good game that I ever played on my Spectrum, which was the first computer that I owned," continues Burton, who's a huge fan of *Jetpac* and the franchise in general. "I still remember going into Foxes Music on Parliament Street in Nottingham, thinking how much it looked like *Defender.* Back then it was like having a proper arcade experience at home, which you didn't always get, because a lot of Spectrum stuff at the time was quite ropey. And I guess that's what we've been trying to recapture. We just really wanted to emulate that feeling again."

In that case, Rare's mission has been well and truly accomplished, for not only does *Jetpac Refuelled* recapture the earthy nostalgia of the original game – thanks in no small part to the re-skinned version that has been included – it also manages to stand proudly on its own two feet and is easily the best title on Microsoft's service that you can currently spend 400 points on.

Interestingly, despite the relatively small size of the download, *Refuelled* actually took around 18 months to complete – quite a lengthy time. As Wilson explains, however, it was mainly because they wanted to stay true to the original 8-bit classic.

"We knew the game we wanted to make but it was more 'what can we do with it?'" he says. "We were trying to work out ways how we could keep it as the same game, but breathe new life into it so that it would also appeal to a new generation of gamers. That was the real challenge: how to do that without destroying what is in essence a very simple game to play."

"There was also the fear that if we started adding too much to it, it wouldn't really be *Jetpac* any more; it would start to become a *Lunar Jetman* or a *Solar Jetman*, or a different game entirely," interjects Burton who, along with fellow senior software engineer Jens Restemeier, spent the most time on the project.

"You also have to consider aspects like the networking which takes a huge amount of time to set up," he continues. "Actually it seems like a pretty small



» Some early concept art of the spaceships your Jetman would rebuild.

SO WHAT'S NEXT?

Rare were reluctant to tell us what their next Live project was (or even if there would be one) so we asked them what they'd like to work on if the opportunity ever arose.

"That's a very difficult question," laughs Restemeier, "but if I was to chose something, I'd probably go for one of the isometric titles like *Knightlore*."

"Yeah, you could do it as some sort of race against other players," interjects Overton, who cites the 1986 *Cyberun* as his own desired remake.

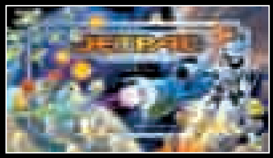
"I'd quite like to do *Lunar Jetman*, but that's mainly because I've got an idea of how it would work," continues Burton. "I was absolutely rubbish at it, but I absolutely loved it. The other one that I quite have a soft spot for is *Snake Rattle 'N Roll*, although I'm not quite sure what we'd actually do with that. I'd love to do *Lunar Jetman* though and I'd start it tomorrow if I could."

But what of producer Wilson? Well he mentions just two words that instantly send a shiver down our spines, especially when we think of the online possibilities. "*Blast Corps*". Well said that man.





IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS

» **DEVELOPER:** RARE

» **RELEASED:** 2007

» **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** 400 POINTS (£3.50)

THE MAKING OF… JETPAC REFUELLED

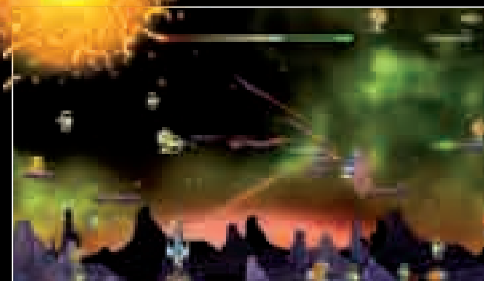


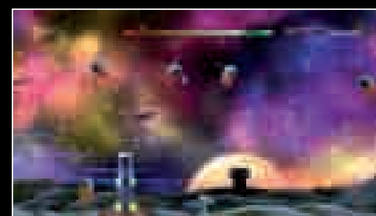


» It starts off relatively quiet but you'll soon be swimming in enemies. Wipe them out. All of them.



» How Wil originally intended *Jetpac Refuelled*'s loading screen to look…





» Your new laser gets more powerful with each pick up.



» Get into your spaceship to move to the next level.



component of the game but it's not at all. It's actually a pretty large engineering task."

And it was a task that Restemeier was all too familiar with, as it's the part of the project that he spent the most time on. Microsoft's insists that online play and leaderboards are integrated into all its Live Arcade titles, and Restemeier soon found that this straightforward-looking shooter required just as much care and attention as some of Rare's bigger projects…

"Basically the whole game had to be engineered for Xbox Live. Even the single-player game is just a multiplayer game but with a single player," he recalls about the time-intensive undertaking. "All the general flow of the game has to match with the other machines; all the positions have to network correctly with the other machines. We also needed to work it out so that people couldn't cheat or exploit the game in any way when playing against each other, so in that respect there was just as much work as a bigger title."

While *Jetpac Refuelled* had a relatively small, part-time team – "We knew we had people here to do it, it was just a case of grabbing them when they were needed," explains Wilson – everyone involved was utterly dedicated in making the finished game as good as possible. Although fans learned of the project late into *Refuelled*'s development, there was still plenty of pressure, although surprisingly it wasn't from the Stamper brothers, who at that time were still at Rare.

"They were more concerned with it being updated," recalls Wil Overton, occasional Retro Gamer cover artist and one of Rare's senior artists. "As far as I can remember, they never like to look to the past, so it wasn't so much the retro version they were interested in but what we'd be doing with the new version. So it was always, 'What can you do to it to make it look better and beef it up?'

"The main pressure definitely came from ourselves," continues Overton, who created the beautiful border that adorns the retro version that Rare has kindly included in the package.

"The first Ultimate game that I bought was *Knight Lore* but I did play *Jetpac*, and after I got that I went back and bought all the other [Ultimate] games that were available. I grew up with all the fancy packaging and the border and the artwork is what I wanted to put back into it. As well as wanting someone who had never played an Ultimate game before to appreciate what we were trying to do, I also wanted the fans to go, 'Oh look, he's put that in it. They must really like the old stuff because they've bothered and have tried to put that into the new one as well.' So it was definitely pressure on ourselves but there wasn't really any pressure from outside, mainly because we announced it so late," to which everyone starts laughing.

You can hardly blame the team for keeping so tight-lipped though as, ever since the debut of the Xbox's *Grabbed By The Ghoulies*, the Twycross-based developer has received (often unwarranted) flak from forums the world over.

"Your only real connection with fans is via the internet and you know what they can be like," sighs Overton. "I just thought to myself, 'You just have to try and do it as well as you can do it.' And besides, you can never judge how they're going to react to something anyway, and usually it's for the worse [he laughs] so I'm not going to even try and appease those hardcore fans, I'm just going to appease myself."

When *Jetpac Refuelled* finally arrived on 28 March it soon became obvious that the hardcore fans had been given plenty of service, both in the form of Overton's gorgeous border that had references to everything from *Sabre Wulf* to *Underwurlde* in its frame, and a version of the original *Jetpac*; although, as Burton



» More concept art, this time it's our hero and his jet pack.



"THERE'S A BIT OF FANCY SHADER WORK THAT GOES ON OVER THE TOP OF IT TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE THE ATTRIBUTE CLASH OF OLD. IT'S ALL A SIMULATION RATHER THAN EMULATION" NICK BURTON



» Okay, so it's not really the original game, but many gamers can't tell the difference.

explains, it's not quite as authentic as many think.

"The retro version we've supplied is not the original," he confirms. "It's actually the refuelled version but it's been skinned and then there's a bit of fancy shader work that goes on over the top of it to make it look like the attribute clash of old. It's all a simulation rather than emulation.

"In fact, it's quite interesting because it's a technique we've already used in *Kameo: Elements of Power*. There are hidden 'retro-rendering modes' which can be unlocked and let you play *Kameo* with Spectrum, BBC and C64 style rendering. You need to score more than 3 million points on the Water Temple though, so hardly anyone's actually seen them."

So why wasn't the original version actually included?

"Well, we did put a 100% anal version of *Jetpac* in there, where you could see the fluctuating frame rate going on," confirms Wilson. "But it just felt too bad and had to come out."

Still, many gamers (including us) have been fooled by the retro version and, as great as that is, the real meat and potatoes is the new *Refuelled* version, which features a progressively stronger laser, huge swarms of enemies to defeat, a larger playing field and an excellent multiplayer mode which has been receiving plenty of play in the Retro Gamer offices.

"Originally we had Duncan Botwood on the team and he designed the multiplayer, but then he had to move onto another title," explains Restemeier. "We basically took what he had as the groundwork and took out anything that didn't work in practice. The real difficulty was that *Jetpac* wasn't originally designed as a multiplayer game. Look at other multiplayer titles and you've got things like deathmatch and capture the flag, but if we had put those into the game we'd have completely lost what *Jetpac* is all about, because it's not about shooting each other. Therefore we wanted to have things like building rockets as quickly as possible, or defending against a set amount of enemies, which made a lot more sense."

Another big improvement of the original classic is the larger play area, your new laser (which can be powered up a maximum of 12 times) and your steadily dropping fuel reserves. But why did the team make these vast alterations to the original game?

"To be honest we did start off with a fixed playfield, but for want of a better word it didn't feel 'next-gen' enough," begins Burton. "We also wanted to up the baddie count and it just wouldn't have worked if everything was confined to a single screen. We also wanted to stop people camping [which could easily be done in the original] so we would place items at the ends of the playfields, forcing you to risk danger if you wanted to earn yourself more points, and brought in the fuel bar."

While the fuel bar was added to counteract an issue the team had with the original game, the laser was to compensate for a change the team had made in *Refuelled*.

"We added the weapon upgrades because of the sheer amount of enemies that were now on-screen," admits Restemeier. "If you had a lot more enemies but only the straight horizontal laser, you wouldn't be able to properly defend against them."

"We knew we had to get some form of progression because we had so many levels in there," adds Wilson. "The obvious thing to do was to the ramp up the speed and number of the enemies, but you've always got to offset that with something, so we used the weapon upgrade. There are three different laser configurations that can all be powered up through four stages."

Despite the numerous new additions, *Jetpac Refuelled* still admirably captures the spirit of the 24-year-old original, and it's all thanks to the dedicated team behind the scenes. Some readers will no doubt ask why we've devoted four pages to what is essentially a brand-new game, but *Refuelled* is so much more than that. And in this day and age, where precious intellectual property is used and abused on an almost daily basis, that's a very rare thing indeed.



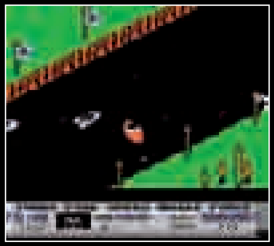
» *Refuelled's* 'Retro' skin was inspired by these Kameo versions. (Top Left to Bottom Right) X60 original , C64, BBC, Spectrum.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

JETPAC
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM, BBC, VIC 20
YEAR: 1983

COBRA TRIANGLE
SYSTEMS: NES
YEAR: 1989

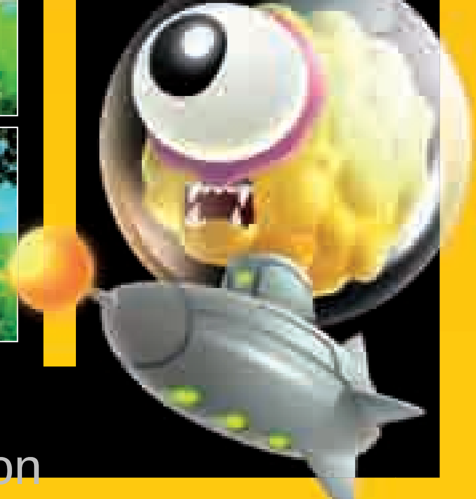
DONKEY KONG 64
SYSTEMS: NINTENDO 64
YEAR: 1999



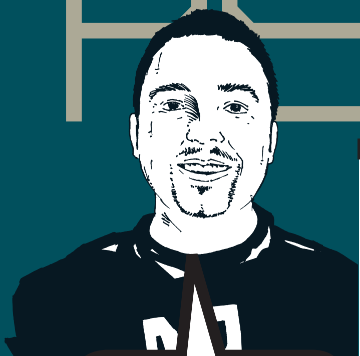
BORDER LINE

As we've already mentioned, the gorgeous border that frames the retro version of *Jetpac* really is a thing of beauty, but how did Overton decide what went into it? "I knew I had to have a border because of the 4:3 ratio mode of the original game, so it was just a case of, 'Well what shall I do to fill it?'" he explains. "I did it over a couple of weeks and as it took shape I started thinking to myself, 'I know, I'll stick in a moneybag from *Gun Fight* and lets see if I can find a decent graphic of the ACG Key and I'll stick that in there as well. At one stage I remember sending out an email asking everyone if they knew anything about *Mire Mare* and if there were any graphics that I might be able to nick something from but no-one knows anything. Either that or they're not telling me…"





RETRORATED



After last month's in-depth DS round-up it seems only fair that we take a look at the latest PSP software. So without further ado, here are some of the best retro-themed games that are currently available for Sony's sleek handheld.

94 LOCOROCO
94 CRUSH
94 MERCURY MELTDOWN
94 TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION
94 SID MEIER'S PIRATES! LIVE THE LIFE
95 SPACE INVADERS EVOLUTION
95 EVERY EXTEND EXTRA
95 AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON
95 ACTIVISION HITS REMIXED
96 THRILLVILLE
96 UNTOLD LEGENDS 2: THE WARRIOR'S CODE
96 VALKYRIE PROFILE: LENNETH
96 VIRTUA TENNIS 3
96 LUMINES II
97 GUNPEY

LOCOROCO

retro GAMER SIZZLER

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** SCEE
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **PRICE:** £15

***LocoRoco* is quite simply one of the happiest experiences you'll have whilst playing on your PSP.** Incredibly easy to get to grips with (the majority of the game is simply played by using the PSP's two shoulder buttons), *LocoRoco* requires you to do nothing more than roll around some beautiful 2D environments and search for a preset number of LocoRocos (and a smattering of other objects should you wish to seek them out). Filled with a wealth of secrets, clever touches and an amazingly surreal soundtrack, *LocoRoco* is an essential purchase for anyone that loves a good old-fashioned platformer. The fact that it can now be picked up for less than £15 means that you have no excuse not to own this classic slice of 2D brilliance.



OVERALL: 92%

CRUSH

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** KUJU
- **PRICE:** £35

We've played some strange games in our time, but this latest offering from Kuju is certainly one of the most surreal we've ever experienced. It all takes place in the warped and twisted mind of young lad Danny, who must reach the exit and the end of each stage. Of course, this is far less simple than it sounds, and to do so he must manipulate the landscape around him – changing it from 2D to 3D and back again in order to make progress. While things start off relatively easy, you'll soon find your head hurting as you adapt to the two distinct views, and while they can be frustratingly difficult to solve, a little lateral thinking will always get you there in the end. Yes it's hard but it's also one of the most refreshing and innovative PSP titles around. More please, Kuju.



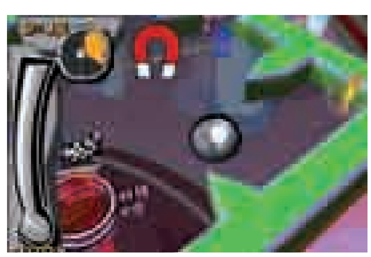
OVERALL: 81%

MERCURY MELTDOWN

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **DEVELOPER:** IGNITION BANBURY
- **PRICE:** £20

Archer Maclean's original *Mercury* was a superb little puzzler that cleverly blended elements of *Super Monkey Ball, Marble Madness* and *Screwball Scramble*. Sadly, too much has been crammed into this sequel and although it's still very good, it fails to build on the success of its innovative predecessor. While guiding your ever-shifting blob around the tricky mazes is still a lot of fun - especially as it can now take on several distinct forms - and far more thought has been put into *Meltdown*'s structure, it just feels like there's something missing from the final product (we're guessing it's the input of Archer). Still, if you're after something a bit different, give it a try.



OVERALL: 78%



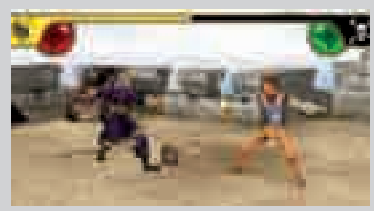
TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** SCEE
- **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- **PRICE:** £20

The PSP may be an impossibly sleek piece of kit, but its naff D-pad and flimsy face buttons means it's not the greatest handheld to play beat-'em-ups on. Which is all the more annoying as this is a very solid effort from Namco. With its staggering choice of characters, impressive visuals and storming soundtrack, this latest iteration of *Tekken V* is very nearly perfect and is only really let down by those aforementioned controls. Still, if you're a fan of the series, *Tekken: Dark Resurrection* comes highly recommended.

OVERALL: 81%



SID MEIER'S PIRATES! LIVE THE LIFE

INFORMATION

- **PUBLISHER:** TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE
- **DEVELOPER:** FIRAXIS
- **PRICE:** £20

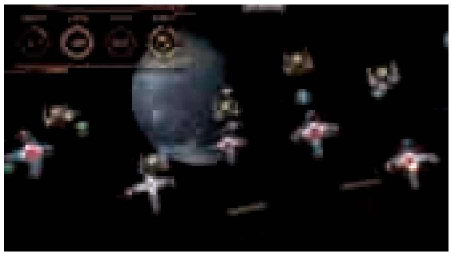
Sid Meier is back with a handheld addition of everyone's favourite seaborne franchise. A clever combination of the PC and Xbox games released a few years back, this PSP iteration is a superb blend and perfectly captures the spirit of the original franchise. High seas battles, sword fights and even dancing all take the form of mini-games that gel together to form a very impressive whole. *Pirates!'* sandbox-styled gameplay ensures that no two games will ever be the same. Well done Firaxis for taking a classic title into bold and exciting new directions.

OVERALL: 88%

SPACE INVADERS EVOLUTION

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPER:** RISING STAR
- » **PRICE:** £30



When we first heard that Rising Star had injected its new *Space Invaders* with elements of the rhythm action genre we thought they'd gone nuts. Now that we've played the final product, we're still convinced that they're completely mad, but somehow it actually works… just about, that is. Timing your shots to the music's beat in order to power them up is certainly a novel idea, but *Evolution* is let down by its dull-looking levels, occasionally iffy controls and samey gameplay. Yes, the original game has been included and the multiplayer mode is fairly fun, but there's just not enough bang for your buck. A shame really, as once you get the hang of the controls it actually makes for an entertaining game. Sadly, *Evolution* is the perfect example of all style and no substance.

OVERALL: **65%**

EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** BUENA VISTA GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** Q ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PRICE:** £20



***Rez* creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi is well known for his love of blending hypnotic music with distinctive visuals and *Every Extend Extra* is no exception.** Basically an enhanced version of the original home-brew classic that appeared on the PC, it's a clever blend of shooting and puzzling that sees you dropping bombs in order to create massive chain reactions, which in turn result in a variety of different jewels appearing. Green jewels increase your bonus multiplier, yellow ones extend your time, while red gems slowly increase the game's speed (and subsequently, the trancey music). The end result is a giddying experience that requires fast reactions, a clear head and the ability to thrive under pressure.

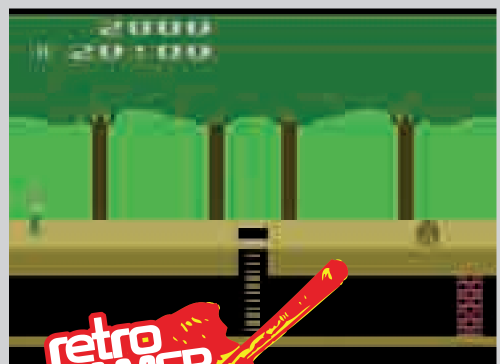
OVERALL: **84%**

ACTIVISION HITS REMIXED

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- » **DEVELOPER:** DIGITAL ECLIPSE
- » **PRICE:** £15

From the moment A-HA's 'Take On Me' plays through the PSP's speakers you know you're going to be in for a nostalgic love-fest of mythical proportions, and boy, this compilation doesn't disappoint. Coded by emulation kings Digital Eclipse, it features over 40 Atari 2600 games, including *Pitfall!*, *Pitfall II*, *River Raid*, *H.E.R.O.* and *Beamrider*. There's also some gorgeous presentation and a selection of classic pop tunes to listen to while you're playing, giving you the full Eighties experience. Emulation throughout is spot-on, and while it lacks the extras that the recent *Sega Mega Drive Collection* featured, it's put together with just as much care and attention. Another essential compilation that proves that the PSP is the handheld of choice for all your retro gaming needs.

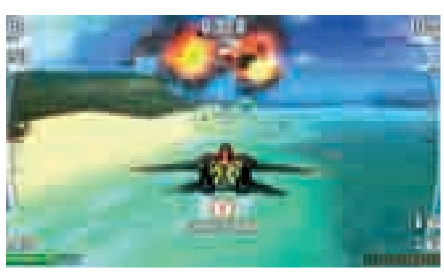


OVERALL: **90%**

AFTER BURNER: BLACK FALCON

INFORMATION

- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** PLANET MOON STUDIOS
- » **PRICE:** £30



Released to tie in with the original game's 20th birthday, *Black Falcon* is everything we were hoping from the *After Burner* franchise. While the gameplay itself is little different from the 1987 original, Planet Moon Studios has included plenty of neat little touches to ensure that its portable title will appeal to those all-important masses – even if they've never played or heard of the original game (who are these people?). The action is constantly fast and furious, there's a huge amount of difference planes and weaponry to unlock and the scoring system means there's always room for improvement. Yes it's simple, but it's also a hell of a lot of fun, just like Yu Suzuki's original – if only Planet Moon Studios had included it here…

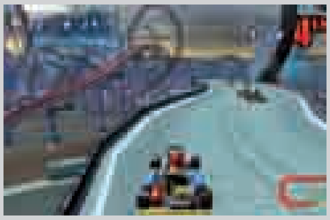


OVERALL: **85%**

RETRORATED

THRILLVILLE

INFORMATION
- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPER:** FRONTIER
- » **PRICE:** £30

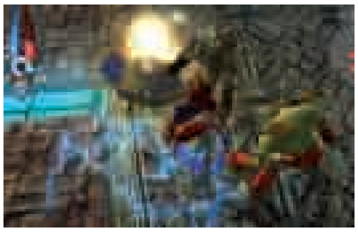


After last month's *Theme Park* we thought we'd had our fill of gaudy fairground simulators. How wrong we were… Created by David Braben's Frontier Developments, *Thrillville* is a superb adaptation of its PC and home console offerings and works amazingly well on the PSP. A selection of mini-games enable you to train employees, there are plenty of different park variables to keep track of, while the construction of the rides themselves is mind-blowingly addictive. It's certainly not the most accessible game to get to grips with and can be rather overwhelming at first. But once it has got its hooks into you, *Thrillville* refuses to let go. Yes it's on the short side, but hey, these games are all about constantly refining what you've created and in that respect *Thrillville* is unbeatable.

OVERALL: 86%

UNTOLD LEGENDS 2: THE WARRIOR'S CODE

INFORMATION
- » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PRICE:** £15



Fans of the Atari classic *Gauntlet* would be wise to check out this second offering from Sony Online Entertainment because, apart from a few bells and whistles, this is essentially the same game. Taking control of a variety of different warriors, ranging from fighters to wizards, *Untold Legends 2* requires you to hack and slash your way through a variety of muddy-looking environments, and that's about it. Alright, so there's a fairly involving storyline, and the ability to play online isn't to be sniffed at but, like Midway's *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows*, there just isn't enough substance here to keep your interest for more than a few hours.

OVERALL: 59%

VALKYRIE PROFILE: LENNETH

INFORMATION
- » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PRICE:** £30



Criminally, the original PlayStation version of this highly regarded RPG never reached UK shores, so kudos to Square Enix for making sure this PSP port arrived safe and sound. It's not the most accessible RPG that you'll ever play, but if you're willing to stick with it you'll find an extremely rewarding storyline, plenty of memorable characters and a host of classic boss encounters. Throw in a selection of different game endings, some new and beautifully crafted CGI cut-scenes and you can almost forgive the shameful lack of guidance and the lengthy load times that initially greet you. Even with its annoying niggles, though, *Lenneth* is an unusual RPG that stands apart from its PSP peers.

OVERALL: 79%

VIRTUA TENNIS 3

INFORMATION
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SUMO DIGITAL
- » **PRICE:** £25



We were chuffed to bits when *Virtua Tennis World Tour* appeared as a PSP launch title, but this latest release from Sumo Digital is a bit of a disappointment. It's not that it's a bad game; far from it. The arcade-style gameplay is as good as ever, as are the visuals and presentation. It's just that there's not enough here to justify a purchase if you already own *World Tour*. Bar a few new mini-games and the odd nip and tuck, this is essentially the same game that appeared two years ago. Admittedly, it's still a great game, but when you consider that *World Tour* can now be purchased for just under a tenner (and an absolute bargain it is too), it's very hard to justify shelling out extra money for a near identical experience.

OVERALL: 80%

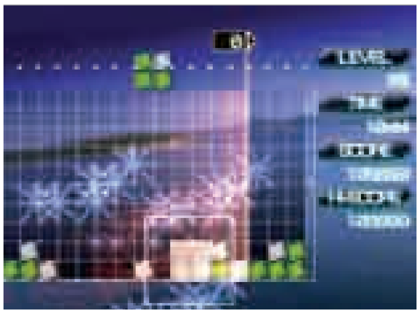
LUMINES II

INFORMATION
- » **PUBLISHER:** BUENA VISTA GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** Q ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PRICE:** £15

When *Lumines* first arrived on the PSP, it instantly entranced gamers with its simplistic gameplay, distinct look and ethereal soundtrack. Sadly, while this sequel adds plenty of new gameplay mechanics into the mix, it's marred by some very disappointing licensed tracks. Of course, we can understand the marketing reasons behind this, but from our point of view, part of what made this hypnotic puzzler so unique has now been lost. Granted, the simple concept of building blocks is still as addictive as ever, but the more we play *Lumines II* the more it comes across as a cynical marketing ploy. You're probably better off sticking with the original.

OVERALL: 69%



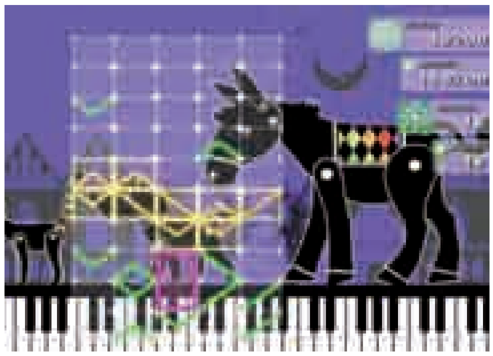


GUNPEY

INFORMATION

» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
» **DEVELOPER:** Q ENTERTAINMENT
» **PRICE:** £25

Forget turning in your grave. If poor old Gunpei Yokoi could see what a hash Q Entertainment has made of his classic puzzler *Gunpey*, the deceased genius would be spinning at around 300 revolutions a second. Apart from the now expected skins update consisting of cool trippy music and outlandish visuals, this is a complete mess of a game that lacks the precise refinement of the WonderSwan original. Controls are needlessly fiddly, the gameplay is dull beyond belief and levels last far, far, far too long. Q Entertainment has made plenty of better titles, two of which are in this very round-up. Forget this sorry excuse of a puzzler and seek out the original instead.

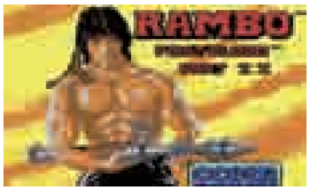


OVERALL: 33%



RAMBO: FIRST BLOOD PART II

HEY HEY JOHN J



- » **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **GENRE:** PUSH-SCROLLING SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** AROUND A POUND



HISTORY

So which really was better? Spectrum or C64? On the evidence presented by The Hit Squad on its compilation *They Sold A Million 3*, the C64 was clearly the winner.

You see, me and my best mate Rob (both aged ten at the time) each received the compilation as a Christmas present, me for the Speccy and he for the C64. The games included were *Kung-Fu Master*, *Ghostbusters*, *Fighter Pilot* and *Rambo*. I spent all Christmas Day playing the games in my bedroom, away from visiting relatives and Xmas TV. Rob had done pretty much the same thing at his house, so on Boxing Day I called round to play on his C64 and compare versions and eat chocolate. A few hours passed and it was painfully clear that the games were superior on the Commie – *Kung-Fu Master* was very close to the arcade version and the presentation on *Ghostbusters* was amazing (I don't recall much about *Fighter Pilot* but we were both really into *Ace* at the time so I suspect it was overlooked). However, it was *Rambo* that hurt the most.

We'd watched the movie on video – a slightly older friend of ours had managed to hire the 15-rated film on account of his wispy tash – and we loved every ridiculous, over-the-top minute of it. The same could be said about Ocean's C64 game. We spent hours marauding through the jungle, destroying everyone and everything in sight. The graphics were small but well drawn, the scrolling was smooth, the audio was excellent throughout (that loading tune – wow!) and the action was suitably intense with bullets whizzing around the screen. On the other hand, the Spectrum version was sluggish with sparse graphics, and a third of the screen was taken up by an oversized score/status panel. Worse still, one measly shot would kill Rambo (yeah right!) whereas on the C64 your man had a much more forgiving energy bar.

I was almost embarrassed to show Rob the Spectrum version and there was some mocking from my C64-owning mate. But I didn't mind. It was inevitable that the boot would soon be on the other foot. Indeed, *Cobra* was just around the corner.





BARGAIN HUNT

HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japanese auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

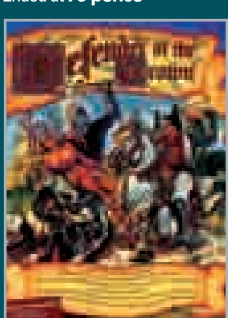
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

NEBULUS
Normally sells for **£2+**
Ended at **£11.01**



DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
Normally sells for **£5+**
Ended at **76 pence**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**

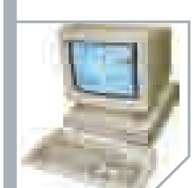


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**

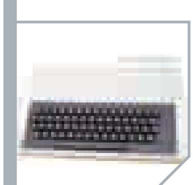


PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

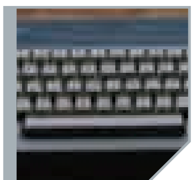
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).

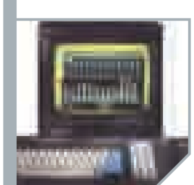


BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built-in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE

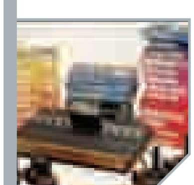


APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



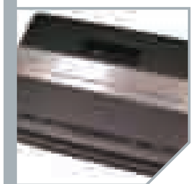
2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

- ROCKING HORSE SHIT
- HEN'S TEETH
- LUCKY FIND
- EBAY REGULAR
- CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN



5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

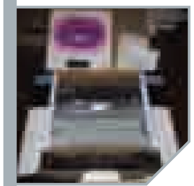


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
This is an Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models available, of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

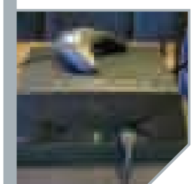
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**
Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



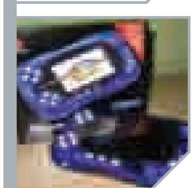
PIPPIN (ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. Its high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs. The Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



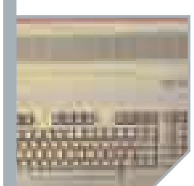
C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well-known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the best-selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

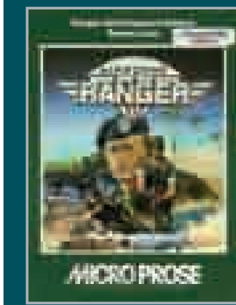


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

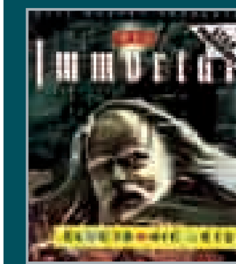


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

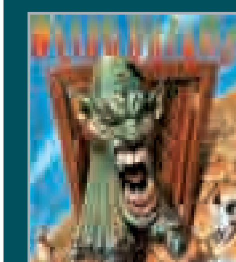
AIRBORNE RANGER
Normally sells for **£2+**
Ended at **£8.57**



THE IMMORTAL
Normally sells for **£4**
Ended at **£1.51**



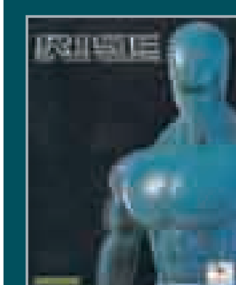
WEIRD DREAMS
Normally sells for **£3**
Ended at **No sale**



THEME PARK
Normally sells for **£1**
Ended at **£7.60**



RISE OF THE ROBOTS
Normally sells for **50 pence**
Ended at **No Sale**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.

- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**

The computer that established the Commodore brand.

- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.

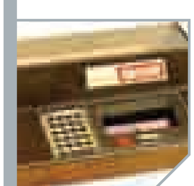


FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!

- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.

- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…

- Planet Earth - Blu-ray
- Clerks II - HD DVD
- Monster House - Blu-ray



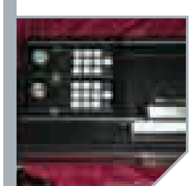
CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

More inanity from the Land of the Rising Sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**

Coleco's third-generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.

- CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived, though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.

- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.

- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



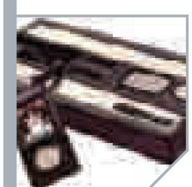
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) on extras**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, it was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.

- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.

- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**

Another attempt by Sony to enter the game hardware market (after the MSX), this time the company took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSone, which is more expensive but looks much nicer in design.

- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer that didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.

- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

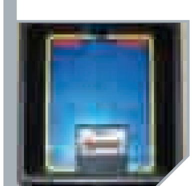
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.

- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

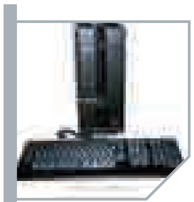
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.

- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

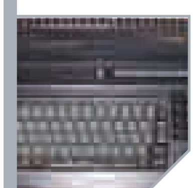
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

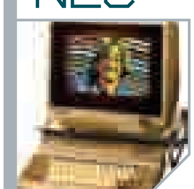


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

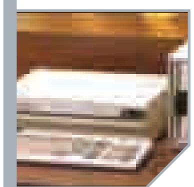
NEC



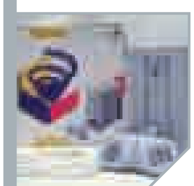
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



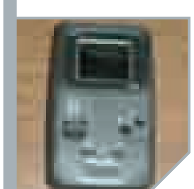
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (prices can fluctuate)**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two systems' Hu-Cards are not compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



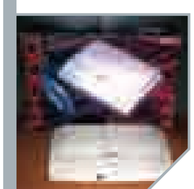
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had six games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

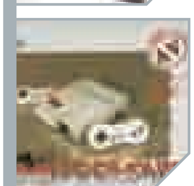


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped-down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a six-button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over 1,000 games to choose from!



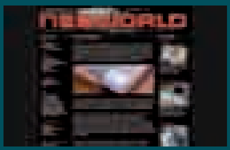
FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

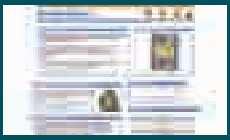
NES WORLD
This website boasts reviews, a friendly chatroom and forum and plenty of articles and interviews (including a look at some of Nintendo's more famous lawsuits). Perfect for any gamer with an interest in Nintendo's 8-bit console.
www.nesworld.com



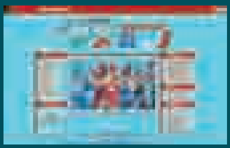
SCREENSHOT ARCHIVE
It's unlikely to prove a huge hit with some computer fans (only the Spectrum appears to have been covered) but everyone else is going to be in nostalgia heaven. Be aware though: the downloads are very big!
www.localarcade.com/screenshotarchive

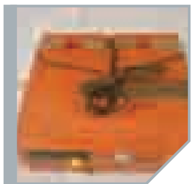


COMPILATION 64
Fairly recent website that aims to record every single C64 compilation ever released. With over 200 entries already put together by Retro Gamer freelancers and forumites, the site is showing plenty of promise; let's hope it branches out to the other 8-bit systems.
www.compilation64.5gigs.com

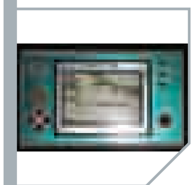


THE MEGA MAN HOMEPAGE
Check out this excellent little website featuring an astonishing amount of information about the little blue hero. Every single game is covered and the different types of Mega Man spin-offs are fully explained.
www.mmhp.net

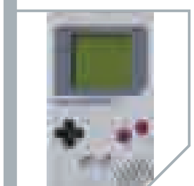




SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



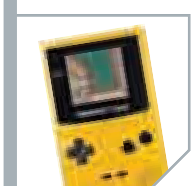
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite its age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact Game Boy, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic Game Boy. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



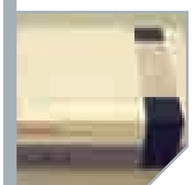
GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge-based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought-after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of its cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and it's very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72-pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of the company's most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



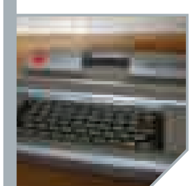
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from 1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips. The 200 series consists of front-loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
This is the consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000 that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



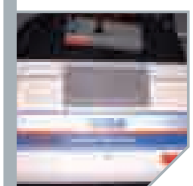
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance its capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



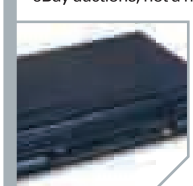
SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.

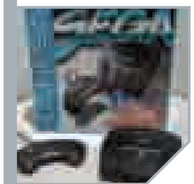


TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection.

Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



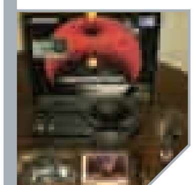
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.
- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.
- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook-style boxes.
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse that, despite an amazing catalogue of games, never really took off.
- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

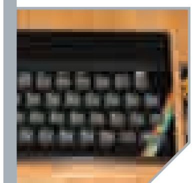
SINCLAIR



ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.
- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
- SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM+
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**

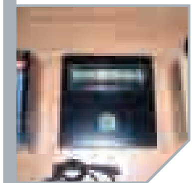


ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, the Spectrum was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.
- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

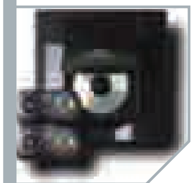
SNK



NEO-GEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High-powered home system by SNK. Features many high-quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



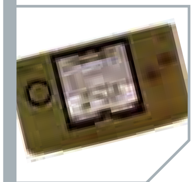
NEO-GEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High-powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home-based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of Neo-Geo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted.)
- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- WAKU WAKU 7



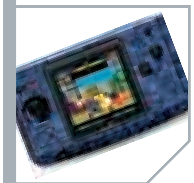
NEO-GEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) (varies)**



NEO-GEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based Neo-Geo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of Neo-Geo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.
- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG



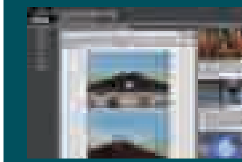
NEO-GEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



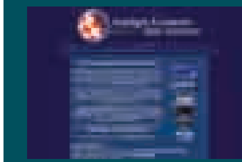
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld Neo-Geo systems by SNK that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system, though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

LOST LEVELS
Ever wanted to know why *Thunder Force VI* was cancelled on the Dreamcast, or why *Final Fantasy III* never received a US translation? Then you need to take a trip to the excellent Lost Levels. Run by Frank Cifaldi, it's a fascinating website that specialises in digging up the dirt on unreleased games. Chances are, if a game's ever been rumoured for a release, you'll find out more information about it on this great site.
http://lostlevels.org/



AMIGA GAMES THAT WEREN'T
Amiga Games That Weren't intends to catalogue every Amiga game that wasn't. There aren't many games on offer at the moment, but site owner Frank Gasking is promising that it's only a matter of time before more content starts appearing.
http://agtw.abime.net/index.htm



THE VIDEOGAME ATLUS
If you've found yourself stuck in a game, with no possible way to move on, then you may want to check out the Video Game Atlus. It boasts a staggering array of maps that cover a wide range of consoles and computers and will prove a godsend to those not wanting to resort to gamefaqs.
www.vgmaps.com

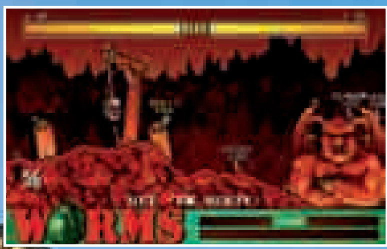


Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

INCOMING!

THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN… WORMS

WITH BRAND NEW DS AND PSP GAMES ON THE WAY, RETRO GAMER LOOKS BACK AT THE HISTORY OF VIDEOGAMING'S MOST VERSATILE ANNELIDS





THE MAKING OF…

QUAKE – It's one of id's greatest achievements and spawned an impressive franchise that still captivates gamers today. Discover the history of the original masterpiece.

OTHER EXCITING FEATURES…

- Our SNK journey finally comes to an end, as we reveal the last part of our exhaustive trilogy. No tears now
- Ed Boon reveals the secrets behind his brutal brawler Mortal Kombat, easily one of the goriest videogames ever made
- The origins of Chuckie Egg, voted eighth best platformer of all time by Retro Gamer readers

retro GAMER

LOAD 40

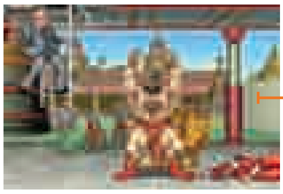
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 19 JULY 2007

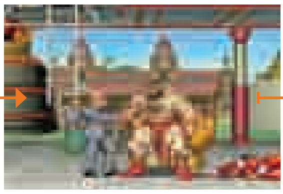
END/GAME



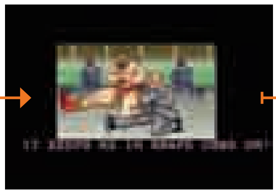
STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR

There are some amazing comedy endings in Capcom's seminal beat-'em-up, and we're pretty sure that many of them are completely unintentional. While Blanka being reunited with his mum is a firm favourite, it's just pipped to the post by Zangief's astounding ending.











SCREEN 1
He may be the head of an evil organisation, but M.Bison is no match for a pumped up Russian wrestler who likes to wrestle bears for fun. Jubilant, the triumphant Zangief punches the air several times in victory, only for a very special guest to arrive by helicopter.

SCREEN 2
Look, it's Gorbachev himself. The Russian president isn't so busy that he can't take time out to personally thank one of his fellow countrymen for ridding the world of an evil organisation, or cop a feel of some very impressive biceps.

SCREEN 3
Set against the backdrop of the Russian flag, the grinning president begins to praise Zangief on a job well done and explains how he has made his country proud. It's a wonderful moment for the mighty Zangief, but the best is yet to come…

SCREEN 4
Gorbachev, his bodyguards and Zangief all burst into an impromptu Russian dance routine that sees them dancing like possessed demons. An astounded Zangief praises Gorbachev for his moves, only to learn that this is how the president keeps in shape.

SCREEN 5
Look, they're still dancing. Forget Ken's tearful reunion with his hideous girlfriend, or Ryu's solemn quest for enlightenment, this is easily the best *Street Fighter II* ending ever. In fact, for sheer entertainment value it's possibly the best game ending of all time.